

Moultonborough Design Charrette

Moultonborough, NH
July 20th and 21st, 2018



Moultonborough Design Charrette Acknowledgements

Thank you to the individuals who donated their time, energy, and expertise for this charrette, and to all the community members who shared their insights about Moultonborough.

The Plan NH Team

Robin LeBlanc
Executive Director
Plan NH

Sarah Wrightsman
Executive Director
Seacoast Workforce Housing Coalition

Peter Michaud
Preservation Tax Credits + Easements Coordinator
NH Division of Historical Resources

Robert White
Landscape Architect
GPI

Marty Kennedy
Senior Principal
VHB

Caite Foley
VP Real Estate Development
CATCH Neighborhood Housing

Robin Lunn
Assistant Town Planner
Town of Milford

Ray Korber
Principal, Founder
KV Associates

Jason Plourde
Project Manager
BETA Group

Kate Ruml
Independent Architectural Designer

Chadd Hippensteel
Landscape Architecture Student at LSU
Intern at Woodburn & Co. Landscape Architecture

Nina Collins
Civil Engineering Student at WIT
Intern at GPI

Susan Slack
Principal Planner
Lakes Region Planning Commission

Alan Hanscom
District Engineer
NH Department of Transportation

Dave Jeffers
Regional Planner
Lakes Region Planning Commission



The Moultonborough Team

Without the support and participation of all of the following individuals, this charrette would not have been possible:

Bob Ward, Moultonborough Town Planner
Jean Beadle, Moultonborough Select Board Chairperson
Walter Johnson, Moultonborough Town Administrator
Cristina Ashjian, Moultonborough Heritage Commission Chair
Leslie Ann Angelo, Moultonborough Select Board, Citizen at Large
Kathy Garry, Moultonborough Historical Society, School Board, and Women's Club
Bill Gassman, Moultonborough Conservation Commission
Sandra Kelly, Moultonborough Planning Board
Diane MacArthur, Moultonborough Heritage Commission
Bev Nelson, Friends of the Moultonborough Library
Jim Nelson, Moultonborough Conservation Commission
Paul Punturieri, Moultonborough Town Moderator
Marie Samaha, Chair, Moultonborough Conservation Commission
Dottie Simpson, Moultonborough Select Board, Citizen at Large
Scott Bartlett, Chair, Moultonborough Planning Board (ex officio)
Jon Tolman, Moultonborough School Board (ex officio)

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Plan NH is grateful for the special support of these members:



Who is Plan NH?

Plan New Hampshire, The Foundation for Shaping the Built Environment (Plan NH), is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization formed in 1989. Plan NH has a *vision* of a New Hampshire that is vibrant and healthy for its people, its economies and the environment. To achieve that vision, Plan NH's mission is to "foster excellence in planning, design and development of New Hampshire's built environment," because we believe that *what* we build, *where* we build and *how* we build anything has a significant impact on that vibrancy and health.

Plan NH *champions principles and ideas* that balance building projects, including anything built in the public realm, such as buildings, roads, bridges, memorials, public sculpture, with:

- the needs of people, including where they live, how they get about, what services are necessary, what they value
- maintaining the "sense of place" of our towns, cities and villages that make them unique, including preserving historic assets, open spaces, agriculture and farming
- protecting our air, water, flora and fauna

Among our signature programs is the *design charrette*, an exercise that brings professionals from our membership together with New Hampshire communities to explore design ideas, usually around a town center or other significant neighborhood. Through recommendations made, Plan NH can demonstrate the role and importance of the principles and ideas noted above in concrete, real examples.



Why did Plan NH come to Moultonborough?



Plan NH had conducted a design charrette in Moultonborough in 2012. Although much progress was made as a result, the Town thought it might be a good time to “restart” the process. It is, after all, a different world today.

In the spring, Moultonborough submitted an application to Plan NH. After revising the scope somewhat (in collaboration with Moultonborough’s Steering Committee), the application was accepted and the date set.

The purpose of the charrette was to look at the Village Center as a whole, guiding conversations that lead to a shared vision for the village and to develop recommendations:

- To make the village center a vibrant focal point
- For creating a sense of place in this part of town
- For expanding opportunities for places to live within the center
- Regarding amenities and services that would bring local residents to the center
- For re-purposing the Taylor House and other properties in ways that would support the vision that the community has defined



Plan NH Comes to Moultonborough, NH

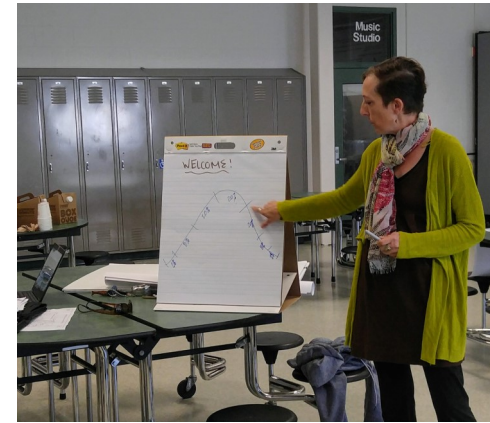
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The charrette team explores the Village Center.



The charrette team is joined by members of the public for a listening session.



The charrette team processed input collected during the listening sessions.



Charrette team members work on drafting recommendations.

What is a charrette?

Simply stated, a charrette is a brief, intense, brainstorming session in which ideas are brought together for the purpose of defining potential planning recommendations and possible design solutions for an identified need. For Plan NH, this is usually related to a town center or other significant neighborhood in a community. Charrettes are typically short. Plan NH's community design charrettes takes place over the course of two days: 8 hours on a Friday for listening and then another 8 hours the next day for brainstorming, crafting recommended solutions, and presenting thoughts to the community.

The process engages planning and design professionals in direct dialog and conversation with local residents to collect information needed in order to develop good and relevant recommendations about how to address a particular challenge. Plan NH sees this part of the process as a period of *discovery*: discovering who the community is, what they value, what they really want. This community input is essential and critical to the value of the outcomes.

The results of a Plan NH charrette are general and overarching planning and design *recommendations*, rather than specific directions. Plan NH does not *dictate*, but *suggests*. Most often, the outcome of a Plan NH charrette is described as a "vision": an expression of how things *might be*, based on what the team saw and heard and learned.



Plan NH invites the community back to hear the recommendations.

char·rette

/SHə'ret/

noun NORTH AMERICAN

a meeting in which all stakeholders in a project attempt to resolve conflicts and map solutions.

Charrettes blend the broad experience of design professionals with local citizens' detailed knowledge of their community to produce a plan of action that addresses issues of particular concern. The charrette provides an overall framework within which more detailed solutions and plans can be developed.

Site Tour Observations



What the Plan NH Charrette Team saw on the tour of Moultonborough's town center:

Route 25 is very dangerous for pedestrians

- Town center is bisected by Route 25
- No sidewalks in village center
- Only one crosswalk in village center
- Shoulder is very narrow and traffic moves quickly

Town center has a small-town, historic feel

- Two buildings on "7 to Save" list across the street from one another
- Town center has the potential to bring people together
- Essential amenities are clustered closely together



Very few homes, only one multi-family building in town center
Only one restaurant in village center (Artie's Pizza and Subs)

What Moultonborough Told Plan NH

What The City Leaders Told Plan NH

Village center is not currently seen as the center – if you asked a seasonal resident, they might say the center of town is Center Harbor.

80 percent of tax base comes from large seasonal homes

Significant population growth during summer months

Largest lake frontage in state (66 miles)

Many retirees live in Moultonborough and population is aging

Attracting and retaining young professionals and young families is a challenge

Safe routes to school... Complete streets project (2027)

Town does NOT have a complete streets policy in place

Currently adding a trail between Academy and Route 25

Lot sizing is based on soil and slopes

25-foot setback

Consider the idea of adding side streets, parallel to Route 25, north and south of village to redirect pedestrians/cyclists, etc.

Workforce shortage (example, Ledgewood market has been CLOSED for three summers due to staffing)

Town House and Tiny School are underutilized

Need housing, need workers, but also need jobs/economic development

School population is declining, but schools are very high quality

Encourage the development of starter homes

Current zoning may present challenge

Many underutilized buildings

Moultonborough has many of the things young families find attractive: low taxes, good schools, recreational opportunities, etc. but no jobs, no housing, and no night life

It is a bedroom community, but there isn't a job center within a reasonable commute

Very little agriculture, most existing farms are family farms, which do not provide primary income source to owners

Currently improving internet access in Moultonborough

No public water or sewer in village center



What Moultonborough Residents Told Plan NH

Two public listening sessions were held during the afternoon and evening of Friday, July 20th. The sessions served as an opportunity for the public to share their comments and ideas about the Village Center. Plan NH’s process encouraged participation and input from *everyone* in the room. A record breaking ~275 people participated in the two listening sessions.

What do you love most about Moultonborough’s Village Center?

- The cohesive look of buildings
- The potential
- Small town culture, scenic views, rural atmosphere, home, “villagey”
- Isn’t overdeveloped
- Quaint
- Amenities and essential services are clustered together
- Country store, library
- New England feel and architecture
- Holiday decorations
- Lion’s Club
- Snow mobile trails
- Proximity of schools
- Cup and Crumb at Berry Pond
- We “like it the way it is”
- Rustic charm
- Historical resources

How would you define the character and ambiance of Moultonborough?

- Natural, outdoorsy, serene
- Safe
- Affordable
- Welcoming people – feels like home
- Slow pace, laid back atmosphere
- Thrift shop in town demonstrates how friendly, caring, and helpful all are
- Simple New England architecture
- Open, green space
- Mountain views on the lake
- Low taxes
- Great place to retire or vacation

What do you want to see?

- Improved flow of traffic
- Tree-lined streets/streetscape improvements
- Village green (center median) with Gazebo through entire village

- center
- Pedestrian walkways BEHIND Main Street buildings
- Add greeting signage to either end of village center
- Take advantage of the beautiful slope behind the town hall (add benches, walkway, etc.)
- Encourage small businesses through regulations
- Update façade of Dollar General
- Farmer’s market
- Sculpture walks
- Tavern, restaurants
- Ice Cream
- A reason to stop into town
- Grow AWAY from, not along, Route 25
- Repurpose the past for an energy-efficient future
- Need something to tie village together
- Repair stonewalls
- Fewer buildings
- More grass, trees, flowers
- More highly visible open space
- Parking
- More opportunities for facilitated discussion like this
- Make the village center a little prettier – needs some sprucing up

What else do we need to know?

- Many comments that indicated residents *like it the way it is*
- Town is resistant to change and doesn’t feel change is needed
- No chain stores, no strip malls, no fast food, no chain restaurants
- Many vacant storefronts – desire additional restaurants, small businesses, etc.
- Involved community with volunteer spirit
- Recommendations need to be simple and realistic to be accepted at town meeting
- Changes should reflect the needs of residents – No more tourists!
- Amenities are clustered together, but in order to use them you have to park and then drive and then park and then drive...
- No place to gather
- No established plan for economic development
- Not safe to walk downtown

Five issues emerged as ones that Moultonborough residents are divided on and could not be included in the listening session summary.

Sidewalks: Many attendees want sidewalks, while many did not. **All agreed that making the village center safer for pedestrians is a priority.** Those who were not in favor of sidewalks offered alternatives, such as creating a walking path behind the village center buildings.

Street lights: Some asked for streetlights, while others prefer becoming a “dark” town.

Housing: Many felt Moultonborough doesn’t need housing and had concerns about what housing would look like and how it would impact the town. **Overwhelming, attendees did recognize housing is needed for downsizing folks and adult children looking to return to their hometown.** Many added that housing is only half of attracting young families – they also need jobs.

Community Center: As noted above, one of our charges had been to look at some existing properties owned by the Town and to make recommendations about re-purposing them. One of these was the Lions Club building. We came in not realizing that this property was under discussion already as a potential site for a new community center. We heard various viewpoints about this. However, we felt the discussion and recommendations being presented warranted more attention than we could give it at the time, so we chose to acknowledge it, but not address it.

Taylor House: Finally, attendees were torn on what to do with the historic French-Taylor House. Some wanted to use it as a community center, some wanted to tear it down, some wanted to sell it for private use. The majority wanted to preserve it to be used as a commercial, residential, or art space.

What makes a great place?

The Plan NH recommendations sought to make the Moultonborough Town Center more...

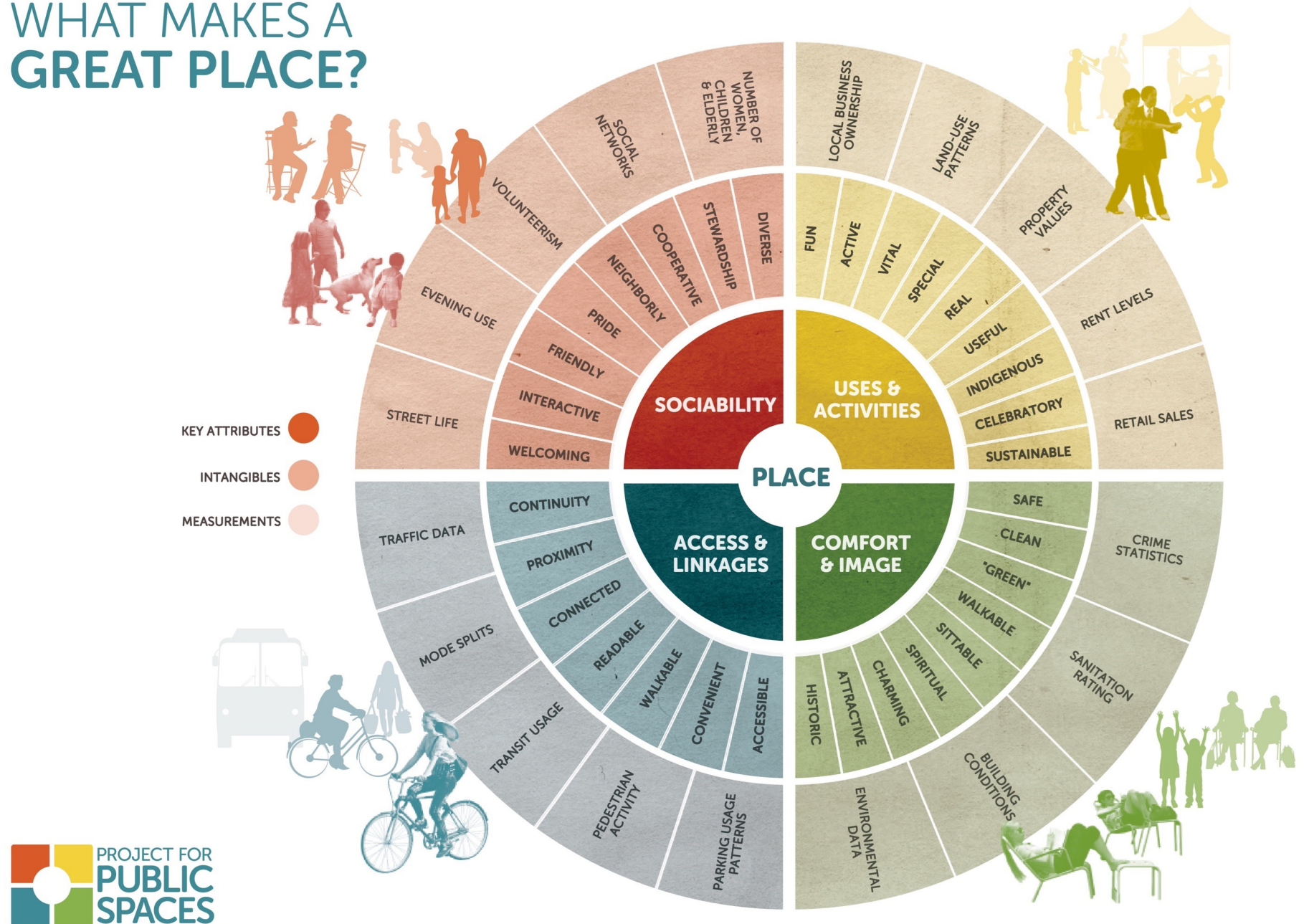
- Social
- Comfortable
- Charming and beautiful
- Accessible
- Connected

The Plan NH team considers what makes a place great when crafting our recommendations. The image on the right from the *Project for Public Spaces* outlines what makes a great place.

For the town center, the charrette team recommendations included:

- Green spaces and the creation of gathering places.
- Use of village path loops to connect spaces and amenities.
- Places to call home to build village life
- Traffic calming to secure livability and safety
- Preserving historical resources and Moultonborough's history.
- Places to play to support health and wellness.

WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?



Methodist Church Area



The charrette team recommends partnering with the United Methodist Church to anchor the historic mission of the church and former school house as a focal point of the village center.

Recommendations:

- Reclaim the former school house to use as a public gathering space.
- Create a new park on the property and connect new park with former school house with skating pond (for example, serve hot chocolate at the former school house during the winter to invite skaters in)
- Remove original access way and replace with a greenway and pocket park.
- Rebuild the gazebo that historically sat over the well
- Create a green access way from the current church parking lot into main intersection of Routes 25 and 109.
- Create an interconnected parking lot and access way behind Main Street from the former school house to the Taylor property. The church parking lot would become part of the larger municipal parking scene and this parallel road would redirect some traffic from the main road.
- This might also create an opportunity for potential residences on the back portion of the church parking lot.
- In addition to the access road, create a village loop walking trail that connects the skating pond to Berry Pond and runs parallel to Route 25 on both sides of the road behind Main Street buildings.
- The “wellness trail” would connect various parts of the village center. The team suggests it might include fitness stations and take advantage of the hill behind the town hall and safety complex (a combination of stairs and accessible winding paths would guide users up the hill).

Places to Call Home

Many community members expressed the need for additional places to live for grown children looking to return to Moultonborough, for local workers, and empty nesters and other residents looking to downsize. Choices in places to live—choices in design, in location and in price point—are key. A vibrant town center starts with people—without people, the village center lacks an important part of vibrancy.

Recommendations:

- Amend current zoning to allow *detached* accessory dwelling units in the village center overlay district, like carriage houses.
- Explore other options for using zoning to encourage the development of missing middle housing typologies, like small cottage clusters and bungalow-style homes.
- Utilize what Moultonborough already has: for example, by dividing larger homes into multiple smaller units and encourage co-living. This is a viable option for the French-Taylor House.

Encouraging smaller, attractive homes (including detached accessory dwelling units) would add to the overall housing supply, increase affordability, attract young families and entrepreneurs, and provide options for empty-nesters and other residents looking to downsize. These types of homes would allow Moultonborough to maintain the beloved New England architectural style and rustic charm of the village center.



Traffic Calming



One element of Moultonborough's Vision statement calls for "A Village that is self-sustaining, vibrant and lively, with a traffic-calmed roadway (former Main Street, now Whittier Highway/Route 25) where pedestrians and bicyclists safely circulate and add to the sense of activity." So how do we go about calming traffic on Route 25 in Moultonborough? The goal of traffic calming is to slow vehicular traffic by alerting motorists that they are entering an area where people live, work, and play, and as a result should expect pedestrian activity. The first and most essential step needed to calm or slow traffic along Route 25 would be to introduce *gateway treatments* that clearly establish the limits of this high pedestrian activity area.

Recommendation:

- Introduce gateway treatments west of Blake Road and east of the Fire Station (Old Route 109). A low-cost option might be to simply install signage along the roadway at the two gateway locations that welcomes motorists to the Village Center. To better define the gateway, shrubs or other landscaping accents could be added around the signage. Perhaps local landscaping companies could serve as a sponsor by maintaining the landscaping. Lighting, banners, and other features could be added over time to continue to reinforce that these two points define the segment of Route 25 where motorists should expect to encounter pedestrian activity and therefore, should reduce travel speeds and yield to pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Reduce the width of travel lanes to 11-foot lanes within the limits of the traffic-calmed segment of the road.
- Identify locations of pedestrian crosswalks and create visible, well-defined crosswalks using stamped pavement, curb extensions, pedestrian refuge medians, lighting, landscaping, signage, and flashing beacons. The team recommends the Town work with the NHDOT to determine the most appropriate design.



Green Spaces, Green Places



Recommendation: Enhance Moultonborough's natural beauty to soften the town center. The charrette team recommends creating accessible walking and driving paths behind the buildings on either side of Main Street— the Village Loop Path. The Village Loop Path would safely connect amenities and essential services and create additional parking behind Main Street buildings.

The Village Loop Path would take advantage of the beautiful hill behind the town hall and safety complex and connect Berry Pond with the skating pond and former school house. The proposed loop would run behind the Methodist Church toward the Taylor House and Moultonborough Academy and across the street. The Village Loop Path could include fitness stations along the trail to encourage wellness.



Historical Resources



Many of the buildings in the town center are historic—the Country Store, Bank of NH, Lamprey House, former school house, and others. The charrette team considered next steps for two in particular: the Grange and the French-Taylor House.

The Grange

The Grange Hall is listed to the NH State Register of Historic Places. It is significant for its architecture and its use as a Grange Hall in the 19th and 20th centuries. It has a high level of historic integrity, but has structural issues that need to be corrected before the building is put into service. The Grange Hall is also in need of work to bring into compliance with ADA and life safety code.

The charrette team recommends the town and historical society work together to attract a developer that would rehabilitate the building. The sale price or lease conditions could be structured to allow for rehabilitation of the building, and efforts could be made to attract a use that will augment community goals, for example a coworking space, business incubator, arts center, or performance space.

The French-Taylor House

The French-Taylor House is eligible for the NH State Register of Historic Places. It is significant for its architecture and its associations with local political figure and community leader James E. French. The house is on a large lot with a building that is important to the village's sense of place. The house is deceptively larger than it appears from the street. It is a structurally solid structure that suffers from deferred maintenance and cosmetic issues.

The building is best suited for continued residential use or office space. The town has an interest in retaining the associated acreage of the property, so the property could be subdivided—preserving the land as green space. The building could be sold or leased to a for-profit entity that would rehabilitate it and return it to the tax roles. The town's expectation for building's preservation could be reflected in the sale/lease and related conditions, such as restricted use.

Big Picture



Concluding Thoughts

The Plan NH charrette team was impressed by Moultonborough's record-breaking turnout at the Community Listening Session. The people of Moultonborough are dedicated to their community. Ultimately, the charrette team hoped to assist Moultonborough turn their village center into a vibrant focal point with a sense of place. The charrette team's recommendations included expanding places to live within the village center, creating pedestrian and vehicle ac-

cess behind the buildings on Route 25, better connect the town's various amenities and assets, take advantage of the town's many historical resources, and create a safer way for pedestrians to travel through the village center. Many folks at the listening session expressed their love for Moultonborough's lakes and mountain views, quaint and rural feel, and very unique cluster of amenities in the center of town.



***Thank you for letting Plan NH be
part of your community!***

Resources

New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority
www.nhhfa.org

NHHFA ADU Guide for Municipalities
http://www.nhhfa.org/assets/pdf/NHHFA_ADU_Guide_final_web.pdf

Lakes Region Planning Commission
<https://www.lakesrpc.org/>

Plan NH Municipal Technical Assistance Grant (MTAG) Program
<http://plannh.org/nh-municipal-technical-assistance-grant-program>

Lakes Region Community Developers
<http://www.lrccommunitydevelopers.org/>

NH Preservation Alliance
<https://nhpreservation.org/>

Department of Transportation
<https://www.nh.gov/dot/>

NH Division of Historical Resources
<https://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/>

Creating 21st Century Communities
<http://placemaking.mml.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/psc-report.pdf>

Project for Public Spaces
www.pps.org



