



**Design Workshop for the Community of the Future**  
“Homes for People Who Work in Your Community”

**Subject**

Community Design Charrettes -2016

(1) Kennebunkport, ME - September 27 & 29

(2) Portsmouth, Gosling Meadows, NH – October 20 & 21  
Owned and Operated by the Portsmouth Housing Authority

**Contact Information**

Workforce Housing Coalition  
Robin A. Comstock, Executive Director  
Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast  
McConnell Center, Suite 302A, 61 Locust Street  
Dover, New Hampshire -03820  
(Office) 603- 842-5682  
(Mobile) 603-496-5841  
[rcomstock@seacoastwhc.org](mailto:rcomstock@seacoastwhc.org)  
[www.seacoastWHC.org](http://www.seacoastWHC.org)

**Attached**

Flyer  
Charrette Agenda

## **For Immediate Release**

**The Charrettes are here!** Join us for our annual community design workshops!  
We will work to provide two seacoast communities a

**“Design workshop for the community of the future”**

**Char.ette:** *A meeting in which all stakeholders in a project attempt to resolve conflicts and map solutions*

**The Kennebunkport:** Two charrette community events are: A Community Listening Session on Tuesday, September 27 and a Community Reveal Report that will occur Thursday, September 29 at 6:00pm. Both events will be held at:

- the Nonantum Resort. The public is welcome!

**Portsmouth, Gosling Meadows** (Owned and Operated by the Portsmouth Housing Authority): Two charrette community events are: A Community Listening Session on Thursday, October 20 at 6:00 pm, and a Community Reveal Report that will occur on Friday, October 21 at 4:00pm. Both events will be held at:

- Gosling Meadows Recreation Center. The public is welcome!

The WHC is a regional non-profit organization that works to be the catalyst for the development of a range of housing options that will be affordable for the diverse workforce of the seacoast region of NH and ME. Our mission is *to be a catalyst through a united coalition of business, government and community groups, for a range of housing options for the diverse workforce of the greater seacoast region of New Hampshire and Maine*. We accomplish our mission through education, advocacy and engagement.

The two-day WHC charrettes are designed to encourage conversations about homes for the workforce, who the workforce is, who needs housing, and why that housing is needed. The program brings together property owners, municipal staff, boards, and community members with volunteer teams of housing professionals. The charrettes generate ideas for neighborhood development that could include modest market-rate homes, as well as a mix of other uses such as commercial, and recreational spaces.

The workforce includes, but is not limited to nurses, teachers, sales associates, firefighters, bank tellers, hotel and restaurant staff, police, medical assistants, young college graduates, empty nesters and seniors too as well as many others. All are critical members of the workforce that serve our needs and the needs of our community. However, members of this group are often priced-out of becoming residents in the seacoast towns of Maine and New Hampshire where they are employed. This is in part because residential development in recent decades focused on large-lot, single-family homes, and luxury apartments that are often unaffordable to those who earn the area's median income. To address this gap between these workers' incomes and median prices for seacoast mortgages and rents.

We already know that several employers experience major issues around being able to attract and keep a viable workforce to support and provide the product and services we both want and need with-in our seacoast communities. In fact, one employer recently confided that accessible and available housing options are such a major issue that the employer rents apartments, close to employment and then provides private bus service to those employees from those company homes. This employer is considering purchasing homes for their workforce.

In addition, there is a genuine concern expressed by civic leaders, about being able to capture and then keep the next generation in the cost prohibitive communities of the seacoast. One civic leader recently asked rhetorically: "Who is going to carry our community into the future, if our children can't live here"

Housing experts generally agree that households should not spend more than 30% of their income on housing.

In Kennebunkport, Maine, where median household income in 2015 was approximately \$70, 524 and the median home price was \$509, 330 it is reported that reported in 2015 that 66.4% of households in Kennebunkport earned annual incomes below the level needed to afford the median home price in Kennebunkport. This indicates that for nearly 66.4% of residents, the available

housing is unaffordable, which puts financial pressure on these households by requiring them to spend a higher percentage of their income on housing.

In Portsmouth, NH the median household income for owner occupied homes is \$95,000 (*ACS data 2010-2014*) which is not sufficient to afford the \$365,000 median purchase price of a home in Portsmouth. Single family home sales remain strong in Portsmouth, although inventory is declining, as home prices continue to trend upward and have surpassed the pre-recession high point of \$318,000. Similarly demand for rental units is strong. Median gross rent (rent plus utilities) for a 2-bedroom unit in Portsmouth is now \$1,414 with a vacancy rate of less than 1% (*NHHFA 2016 rent survey*). Affordability is a factor here as well. Median renter income of \$45,643 (*ACS data 2010-2014*) can afford a monthly gross rent of \$1,141.

A third of Portsmouth homeowners are cost burdened, paying more than 30% of their income on principal, interest, taxes and insurance. Likewise, 41% of Portsmouth renters pay more than 30% of their income on rent and utilities.

Therefore, an important question we ask is: *If housing is unaffordable to many residents already living in these towns, how out-of-reach is it to people who would like to move in, and who our employers want and need as employees?* This points to the problem that both WHC charrettes are trying to address: how might our communities plan for future development that includes homes affordable for the local workforce that provides the products and services we agree we want, and need, to have in our community to insure the quality of life we want to have?

To be clear, the WHC is not a housing developer. Instead, we are a catalyst to create a united coalition of business, government, and community groups for the development of a wide range of housing options for the diverse workforce of the greater seacoast region of New Hampshire and Maine.

The charrette events will generate conversation about community in the future, and conceptual renderings will ultimately be created and presented to the community, based on the community impute that identifies needs and interests and possibilities for the future that includes workforce housing. These concepts

will be presented as architectural renderings to help inform future planning based on gathering ideas directly from community members.

As important as all of the above, the charrette process provides a chance to pause and consider, structures character, form, and format for the future, and a complete review of land use regulations, zoning, ordinances and other regulations to insure they enable and facilitate the ability to create the community that meets the needs of the resident in the present and the future.

The public is welcome and encouraged to attend both the Community Listening Session and the Revel Report

###