



THE ENDORSEMENT PROCESS

Background information

The Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast (WHC) is an alliance of businesses, government and community groups. Our mission is to work in a responsible way toward an increase in workforce housing in our region. The WHC seeks to promote balanced communities that provide housing for households with different needs and income levels.

The concept of “workforce housing” includes affordable housing, market-rate housing, and mixed-income housing. The types of housing include houses, townhouses, condominiums, apartments and co-housing. The WHC believes the availability of diverse housing choices is critical to the economic vitality of the greater Seacoast region of New Hampshire and southern Maine.

The WHC seeks to promote the approval and construction of a significant number of units that may not otherwise be built. We educate municipal officials about the economic and social benefits of workforce housing, while also educating developers about how to incorporate quality design and community development elements into their projects. The Endorsement process begins when a developer is in the conceptual or design development stage of a housing project. He or she meets with the WHC’s Endorsement Committee as the development evolves, utilizing as many of the guidelines as possible. The Endorsement Committee then reviews the final submission from the developer (outlined on the last page of this document). Upon committee consensus or “endorsement”, the WHC will advocate for the project through the planning process.

WHC support may include any or all of the following:

- A letter of support for the project from the WHC that can be publicly circulated at the discretion of the developer.
- Support letters from individual WHC members and organizations can be written for public circulation.
- Active advocacy of the project, including:
 - Testimony at public hearings by a WHC representative and individual WHC members representing their organizations and businesses
 - Recruitment of key opinion leaders, neighbors, and other allies to testify at public hearings
 - Letters to the editor in support of the project

Purpose

The WHC created Endorsement Guidelines to promote housing initiatives that:

- Increase the supply of workforce housing in the Greater Seacoast region of New Hampshire and southern Maine
- Are appropriately located, employ quality design and construction, and provide community benefit

Use

The WHC's Endorsement Guidelines can be used as:

- A guide for developers in the planning of new projects; and
- An evaluation tool for the WHC's Endorsement Committee
- A resource for municipal boards and staff drafting their community's Master Plan or Land Use regulations
- A resource for the Greater Seacoast community at-large to better understand how quality housing can be an asset to communities

Goals

The Endorsement Guidelines take into account the desire to resolve our housing problems while also seeking to achieve other goals that encourage vital communities:

- Support a vibrant economy by enabling employers to attract and retain skilled employees
- Provide a diversity of housing types for residents of varying ages, income levels and abilities
- Maintain the integrity of existing historically significant buildings, core downtown areas, and community centers
- Promote adaptive re-use of existing structures
- Offer innovative design solutions
- Promote use of existing and new public transportation systems and thus reduce traffic congestion
- Conserve and enhance open space and natural habitats
- Reduce air pollution and solid waste, limit energy consumption, and minimize environmental impact

ENDORSEMENT GUIDELINES

The Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast advocates for an increase in the supply of workforce housing. Workforce housing includes a variety of housing types, and provides for households with different needs and income levels. New workforce housing should attempt to meet as many of the following guidelines as possible:

1. Promote Affordability

- Create housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income wage earners through:
 - Affordable (income-eligible) rental or homeownership developments
 - Mixed-income housing developments (e.g. market-rate housing with an affordable component, or affordable housing with a market-rate component)

Who needs affordable housing?

A typical low-income household earning \$30,000 per year can afford a two-bedroom apartment costing \$700 a month including utilities – approximately 20% below today’s market rent. According to HUD guidelines, jobs that pay “low income” wages include day care teachers, fire fighters, secretaries, bank tellers, and car mechanics.

A typical moderate-income household earning \$60,000 can afford a home costing approximately \$167,000*, currently 30% below the median cost of a home in the Seacoast region.

*Mortgage amount is an estimated figure based on 30% housing ratio that includes PITI and Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI). Calculations are based on a 30yr NHHFA fixed mortgage rate of 6.5%, 0 Points, 5% down payment. Real estate taxes, homeowner insurance, PMI are estimated figures. Rates, tax and insurance figures will fluctuate with market.

We will use these definitions of “affordability”

Homeless Housing: Housing affordable to households at or below 30% of the Area Median Income, currently \$17,200 for a family of four. (This category includes housing for the working homeless.)

Rental Housing: Housing affordable to households with incomes up to 80% of the Area Median Income, currently \$53,600 for a family of four.

Ownership Housing: Housing affordable to households with incomes up to 120% of the Area Median Income, currently \$80,400 for a family of four.

2. Promote Livable Community Design

- Design residential and mixed-use developments to be compatible with the setting, complementing and enhancing the existing neighborhood and public spaces.
- Promote social interaction, pedestrian-friendly design, innovative parking arrangements, and other principles of urban village design.
- Size projects appropriate for the community.
- Create “Lifecycle” housing -- having a variety of housing types help ensure a healthy mix of residents of varying age groups, income levels and household types.
- In mixed-income developments, equitably distribute income-eligible housing throughout the development.
- Where permitted and in Planned Unit Developments (PUD), integrate work, shopping, entertainment, and recreation into your development.

3. Promote Quality Construction

- Minimize construction and operational and maintenance expenses over the life cycle of housing.
- Use high quality, energy efficient products.
- Provide reasonable amenities, including good in-door environmental quality (e.g. adequate lighting, air quality, and ventilation, minimal odors and noise, maximum privacy and effective moisture management).
- Address potential safety concerns.

4. Encourage Compact, Mixed-Use Development

- Encourage the creation of “new” town centers by directing compact, higher density in-fill development to existing infrastructure.
- In rural areas, protect valuable open space and farmlands by clustering housing in appropriate landscapes or building on smaller lots than the maximum size prescribed in the zoning regulations.
- Where permitted, take advantage of density bonuses for the provision of affordable housing.
- Use environmentally sound, sustainable design principles for habitat protection.

5. Promote Use of Public Transit, Pedestrian and Bike Trails

- Wherever possible, locate housing developments near existing and planned public transportation, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and park & ride lots.

6. Promote Economic Development and Sustainability

- Whenever possible, locate housing developments near employment centers

7. Provide Community Benefit

- Provide additional needed benefits to the community, possibly including a conservation easement, community center, day care center, playground, ball fields, public access, or provision of resident support services.

AN INVITATION TO DEVELOPERS

We encourage developers interested in our Endorsement Process to contact the WHC at the earliest possible date, preferably during the design development stage or even the conceptual stage. This way, the Endorsement Committee can provide early input on the project's potential for endorsement and hopefully work out any significant barriers. At a minimum, requests for support should be received at least four weeks before the action for support is needed. Please include the following with your submission:

Proposed Development: A map of the proposal (site plan and area map) should be submitted along with the following development details:

- The timeline for development
- The total number of units, with number of bedrooms per unit
- The total acres of the development
- Plans for mixed use
- The proposed price of units, the number of units proposed at each price level, the range of incomes necessary to purchase or rent these properties, any provisions for long-term affordability of the housing units
- Specifications for a typical unit
- List of major employers within a 15 mile radius of the development
- List of proposed community amenities
- Location of nearest rail, bus transit route, pedestrian or bike trails, or park & ride lots and information on service frequency
- Synopsis of the environmental and cultural conditions

Approval Process: The person(s) or organizations submitting the request should provide a schedule of public hearings and their locations.

Background Summary: A brief background summary should be included with the request for support. Please provide the following type of information:

- Summary of past work in the area
- Any background information on the applicant

Endorsement requests should be sent to the following address:

**Endorsement Committee
Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast
1555 Islington Street
Portsmouth, NH 03801-4215**

Questions? Contact Lisa Henderson, Program Coordinator: (603) 766-3131 or lisa@seacoastwhc.org

workforce housing coalition

OF THE GREATER SEACOAST

A united coalition of businesses, government and community groups advocating and working towards a responsible increase in regional workforce housing. We believe the availability of diverse housing choices is critical to our economic vitality.

Housing “Toolkit”

Municipally-sponsored Opportunities to Increase the Supply of Workforce Housing

1. **Accessory Apartments** – (Also known as in-law apartments or Granny Flats) small dwelling units added to or constructed within an existing single family house. This option increases the supply of housing within the footprint of an existing structure, provides income for the homeowner, and offers less expensive housing for the renter, as well as security and companionship (in the case of elderly residents).
2. **Conservation/Open Space Development** – a land development technique which allows buildings to be grouped more closely together, disturbing a smaller portion of the site than conventional development to preserve open space. Grouping buildings can decrease the cost of infrastructure construction, long-term maintenance costs, and hopefully reduce the per-unit cost.
3. **Planned Unit Development** – A comprehensively planned land development project which permits flexibility in the siting of buildings, allows a mixture of housing types and sometimes other land uses, provides useable open space, and preserves significant natural features. Similar to open space development, but also allows mixed-use development that, with sufficient density, can help create a “community within a community”.
4. **Master Plan Statements of Values** – The community’s visions and values on how it wants to grow is described in its Master Plan. This is a policy document that supports and validates a community’s land use regulations and controls. When appropriate, a Master Plan should reference the growth and design concepts that encourage varied housing opportunities such as Minimum Impact Design, New Urbanism and Smart Growth. Development priorities would speak to the need to:
 - Create Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices
 - Create Walkable Neighborhoods
 - Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration
 - Foster Distinctive, Attractive Places with a Strong Sense of Place
 - Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair and Cost Effective
 - Mix Land Uses
 - Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty and Critical Environmental Areas
 - Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices
 - Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities
 - Take Advantage of Compact Building Design

5. **Infill Construction**– Development that makes use of vacant or underutilized land and buildings in downtown or suburban areas. Infill developments provide more affordable housing opportunities for smaller households (i.e. singles, the elderly and empty nesters), discourage sprawl, make use of existing infrastructure, encourage community revitalization, and make residents less auto-dependant.
6. **Mixed-Use Development** – Through land use ordinances and regulations that allow mixed-use development, higher densities are allowed and thereby permit more diverse residential opportunities. Intensifying the use of a location, allowing second floor housing above retail space for example, often will create a demand for and improve the efficiency of services such as public transit.
7. **Inclusionary Zoning** – In exchange for development approval, developers must include affordable homes when they build a particular number of market-rate homes. Some communities allow building the units off-site or a contribution to a housing fund in an equivalent amount of money.
8. **Density Bonus** – Developers who commit to allotting a certain percentage of units at below market rates may be allowed to reduce lot sizes or increase the number of houses on a lot, thereby reducing land cost per unit. Density bonuses may be used in conjunction with a open space development or planned unit development where the community desires to preserve open space and have lower municipal costs (street, water, sewer). Municipalities can also offer density bonuses in a “trade” with developers who agree to provide additional community benefits, such as nature trails, a conservation easements, additional public transportation stops, or public access to waterways.
9. **Lot Size Reductions** – Where the infrastructure (water and sewer) allows, reducing the lot size is a solution to lessen the cost of building housing, with savings that can be passed along to buyers. Relaxing of regulations regarding frontage or lot width requirements, allowable lot coverage, side and rear setback, and the height of structures promote smaller, more affordable lots.
10. **Donation of Municipally Owned Land** – Can be linked with the recipient providing lower cost, affordable housing. Towns with land or property received through tax liens can donate them to affordable housing developers who will rehabilitate them into permanently affordable housing.
11. **Housing Trust Fund** – A trust fund earmarked for a community’s housing needs can be made up of developers’ contributions, repayments of CDBG loans, sale of municipal owned property, higher building permit fees, town and city capital budget appropriations, Inclusionary zoning payments made in lieu of providing on-site units, and annual repayments of loans made by the housing trust fund. The money in turn can be used for building or rehab, subsidizing low and moderate-income families’ mortgages and helping finance construction of new housing.
12. **Limiting Condominium Conversion** – Conversions to condominiums usually increases the cost of housing and often displaces residents. An ordinance that requires a certain percentage of units remain in the rental market to prevent large reductions in a town’s available rental stock. Turnover of affordable units can be prevented through deed restrictions.

13. **Linkage** –A municipality requires the provision of affordable housing in return for a permit to build certain types of development. The concept is that there is a link between the construction of offices and/or industrial facilities and the need to accommodate workers.
14. **Manufactured Housing Subdivision** – With improved construction quality in recent decades, manufactured housing provide viable option for people seeking affordable homeownership opportunities. Towns can develop design standards for manufactured housing to ensure quality design and siting.
15. **Parking Space Allotment** – Reducing the requirements for parking space per unit reduces overall costs. Reductions result in more efficient use of land, more units per site, and more open space. Particularly effective in multi-family housing when related to the number of bedrooms (i.e. 1.25 spaces for efficiencies, 1.35 for one-bedrooms, 1.5 for 2 bedrooms, etc.)
16. **Streamlining of Permit/Review Process** – When governments (state and local) can better articulate the ground rules for development, strive to decrease the number of months for approvals, and can consolidate permits, then the costs of development can be decreased.
17. **Street Right-of-Way and Pavement Width Reduction** – Purpose is to reduce development costs, also including options such as reducing sidewalk requirement from two sides of the street to one and reducing the thickness of pavement.
18. **Encourage Non Traditional Housing Developers** -- Nonprofit organizations, communities and neighborhood associations are increasingly involved in the rehabilitation and upgrading of older or substandard housing for affordable housing. This private sector solution can be encouraged by reducing regulatory requirements, streamlining the approval process and waiting permit fees. Municipalities can inform these parties of federal and state subsidized housing and financial programs to serve their work.
19. **Infrastructure Investment** – Expansion of water and sewer service areas and/or allowing community water or septic systems in appropriate areas provides alternatives for developers whose cost rise dramatically with the need for wells and private septic systems.

Sources:

Affordable Housing in the Seacoast: Needs and Options for Action by Susan Werner Thoresen. For the United Way of the Greater Seacoast, January, 1987.

Rockingham Planning Commission Housing Policies, revised 9/2001: (603) 778-0885

Strafford Regional Planning Commission: (603) 742-2523

Congress for the New Urbanism: www.cnu.org

For more information about the Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast, contact Lisa Henderson: (603) 766-3131 or lisa@seacoastwhc.org.