



**Town of Marlow,
New Hampshire
Community Design Charrette
October 2 and 3, 2015**



Marlow Community Design Charrette Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks go to those individuals who donated their professional and personal time to make this charrette a success. Also, many thanks to the citizens, businesses and town officials who shared their time, services, thoughts and knowledge with us.

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And

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The MarlowTeam

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

Board of Selectmen

Robert (Bob) Allen – Chair

Thomas Fuschetto

Edward Thomas

Planning Board

James Strickland – Chair

Erin Handy – secretary

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



Plan NH Comes to Marlow, NH

October 2 & 3, 2015

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.

Plan NH's *role, or Mission*, in achieving that Vision is to encourage good planning and design and development because, we believe, that *what* we build, and *where* and *how* we build it has a significant impact on that vibrancy and health.

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

- The needs of people - 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 our 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.

What is a Design Charrette?

Simply stated, a Charrette is a brief, yet intense, brainstorming session in which information and many 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.

The charrette is typically of a short duration – for Plan NH, 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 Charrette Process:

- Identify the need or opportunity
- Collect information from the community itself to understand more deeply and broadly the situation
- Analyze and evaluate what is seen and heard
- Develop conclusions and recommendation for meeting the need or addressing the challenge

Most importantly, the process engages planning and design professionals (and/or others with related areas of expertise) in direct dialog and conversation with local residents and community representatives 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, dream and hope for. 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, "how to" construction 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 through the discovery process.

The Marlow Charette - An Overview

Marlow is a special place, an actual still-rural community. Many towns across the state call themselves rural, but the landscape is often dotted with subdivisions and even small strip malls. Marlow does not, for the most part, have that.

Economically, we live in a new world now. The days of a large company coming in and employing, at decent wages, a good portion of the townspeople are long gone. (Possible, but highly unlikely, especially for a town like Marlow, which is near neither a major highway, rail line nor waterway). So what can Marlow do?

In the listening sessions, we heard loud and clear that Marlow's best assets are:

- Beautiful natural resources
- History
- Beautiful village center setting
- Sense of Community
- Peace & Quiet

Marlow also has:

- A wonderful elementary school. Its small size is seen as a not-good thing by some. We see this as a huge opportunity for the students, and in talking with the dynamic principal, it appears he does, too. His innovative curriculum and ability to focus on the individual students is not possible in most schools across the state.
- Lakes – wow, do you have lakes. We are pleased that they are stewarded so lovingly.
- At least three working farms
- Kroka
- Trails for people who like to hike, who like to bike
- The Ashuelot River
- The intersection of Routes 123 and Route 10, the College Highway, which is a Scenic Byway in several places.
- A sense of pride and understanding that the town needs to invest in its assets

At the same time, we heard that **Marlow does NOT have:**

- A store for basic necessities
- A gas station (the closest is 8 miles away)
- Consistent broadband/hi speed internet services (although you are working on this complex issue - complex due to your and the various service providers)
- A place to meet friends for a cup of coffee or bite to eat

We also learned that a significant percentage of Marlow residents are over 55, and that there is a worrisome *decline* in younger people and young families staying or moving to town.

So, what could Marlow do, through its built environment and community design, to

- Support those who wish to stay in Marlow as they grow old (Boomers and the older generation)
- Attract young Millennials to live and/or work in Marlow?

In our work across the state and from what we are learning nationally, we finding that Boomers and Millennials are looking for very similar arrangements:

- Places to live that are small and efficient (both in layout and for energy-use)
- Places to live/work that are within easy walking distance to
 - Basic services (e.g.: groceries, hair salon/barber, library)
 - Basic health services (walk-in health clinic, dentistry, eye)
 - Places to be social, either planned or spontaneous (e.g. coffee shop, pub, parks)
 - Places to be active (e.g. parks, trails)

As for living arrangements, we are finding that overall, most Boomers do NOT want to be segregated into “over 55” communities or retirement homes. Multigenerational living enhances the lives of everyone, at any age. We are also finding that many people, even if still healthy, would like to share their homes with others – with either friends and family of the same generation, or even Millennials. There are many reasons for this – economic, of course, but social contact is extremely important as well.

Marlow will never be a Keene, but it does not need to be. Boomers and Millennials alike are attracted to the bustle of larger towns and cities and what they offer for places to live, places where people can walk and/or bicycle to get to where they want to go. There is also a wide variety of places to get groceries (including fresh produce and other local food), shop for clothes and other items, be entertained, eat out or just have a cup of coffee or glass of wine.

There is also a significant group of people who want what Marlow has: a peaceful, rural setting with year-round opportunities for outdoor activities – hiking trails, river and lake canoeing and kayaking, fishing and more.

Change is inevitable.

Marlow may want to keep its sense of place and identity, but keep in mind that a community is an eco-system of sorts, and without diversity, it cannot be resilient.

Welcome new people. Attract young people and families so that Marlow can continue to be the strong place that it is.

In the West, there are communities that are using their mountains and trails and streams as a marketing tool to attract young entrepreneurs. Marlow could do the same.

For the Boomers, we need to keep in mind that many of us are and prefer to be as active as we can even as we get older. 70, 80 and even some 90-year-olds are still hiking and canoeing/kayaking if we have the opportunity. And those opportunities keep us healthier – both physically and mentally. Marlow has those to offer.





Why did Plan NH come to Marlow?

In March 2015, the town of Marlow submitted an application for a Plan NH Community Design Charrette. The town was seeking assistance to identify opportunities for consolidating aging public safety facilities, a site for a store/gas station & community gathering space and to identify economic development opportunities centered around Marlow's unique location and natural amenities.

Upon formal consideration, the application met three essential criteria:

1. The completed application identified a specific area of need and interest within the community, and the community was eager and ready to address it
2. The application's description of existing conditions in the community demonstrated that there was organized and committed community support already present in Marlow.
3. Marlow was recognized as a community that takes initiative and was ready and willing to follow through.

Formal approval was confirmed following a meeting between Plan NH representatives and key players in Marlow in the summer of 2015. At that time they chose the October dates for the charrette.

Marlow's Proposal and Challenge to Plan NH

The challenges to Plan NH:

How can Marlow have a vibrant town center by promoting economic development that includes the social, economic and cultural assets of the Village?

OR

What type of planning and other pro-active actions might Marlow take with respect to the Village in order to meet future needs of the community, promote its vitality and vibrancy, preserve its small-town atmosphere, and its cultural and historic values?



"We can begin by doing things at the local level, like planting community gardens or looking out for our neighbors. That is how change takes place in living systems, not from above but from within, from many local actions occurring simultaneously."

Grace Lee Boggs

The Charrette Process & Overview

Marlow Town Officials and residents gathered with the **Plan NH** Charrette team on Friday, October 2, 2015 in the Town Offices to discuss the details of the town's proposal with the Plan NH team. Design professionals on the team included an architect, two civil engineers, an traffic engineer, a landscape architect, a planner, and the Plan NH Executive Director. The critical piece that the Charrette Team lacked, which only the local residents could provide, was the intimate knowledge of the Town and the vision for its future.

Local residents are the experts on the community — what makes sense, what history has brought forth, what will pass at the local board meetings — the design team relies on resident input and knowledge to develop viable suggestions and proposals.

After a bus tour of Marlow, an introductory meeting was held with key elected officials, and community leaders to inform the Plan NH team about the significant issues facing the study area.

Marlow is a working-person community, with many still-rural attributes. The town is lucky to have a defined Center, but the only store in town, with its gas station, was closed several years ago. This leaves the library as the only functioning gathering place in town.

Two public "listening sessions" were held on Friday afternoon and evening., with a wonderful community supper held in between sessions.

The purpose of these listening sessions was to describe the challenge that the town had set out for the charrette team and to gather input from the community regarding thoughts and ideas they had about the Town.

Citizens answered questions :

- What do you see in Marlow?
- What changes have taken place over the last 20 years?
- What's missing?

Saturday was "roll up the sleeves day", when the charrette team reconvened, recapped, and prepared recommendations and supporting graphics for presentation to the Community in the afternoon.

What we heard from Marlow



Here is a summary of answers to the questions posed in the Listening Sessions

What do you see in Marlow?

- Rural nature and features
- Sense of community
- Feeling of safety and security
- School district—Non-traditional curriculum

What changes have taken place over the last 20 years that have affected the town?

- Volunteer “burnout”
- Fewer community events
- Growing older population, fewer younger people
- Family economics

What’s missing?

- Places to gather
- Broadband
- Basic services - Food, Fuel
- Local enterprise



Getting a Store/Meeting Place for Marlow

One of the issues and concerns of the Marlow residents was the lack of a store and meeting place. There is also a concern about the lack of a fueling depot or gas station. As part of the Charrette, we examined this issue and looked at possible sites for a store.

It was generally agreed that what was most needed and desired was not just a convenience store but a place where people could also gather and meet to sit for a while and enjoy a cup of coffee and conversation with their neighbors. When we refer to a “store,” it is this larger concept of a store and meeting place we are referring to.

There are several location options for a store in Marlow. Some of these locations, as many know, are privately owned and the use of those sites is dependent on sale or lease of the land and in some cases, the building. There are other sites that are owned by the Town that could be available with Town approval.

SITE OPTIONS

Former Store Site

The site of the former Store, now closed. This site of .2 acres on the corner of Route 10 and 123 has the old store building (~1,700sf). The gas tanks and pumps have been removed and it is not possible to re-install gas tanks and pumps on this site due to the close proximity to the Ashuelot River. This site is privately owned (Gallup & Hall) and would have to be purchased or leased. If this site could be used, the old store building would have to be substantially renovated and expanded or razed and a new store building built.



Town Owned Property across from the Post Office

This site of approximately 8.3 acres, obtained from the State, includes land south and north of the Recycling Center as well as the RC itself. There is potentially enough space on this site for a store and a small gas depot. Access to the site would have to be coordinated with the State DOT due to the blind curve at the north end of the site.

Pat Gallup property north of the Post Office

This site of ~ 5.2 acres is bounded by Route 10 to the west and the Symondsville Road to the north. It is owned by Pat Gallup (Gallup & Hall) and a part of the property is leased to the USPS for the Post Office. Besides the PO building there are four (4) other buildings on the site. There is ample space available for a store and a gas station here.

The Christmas Trees Inn Building and site

The use of this building and site might be a long shot but it would be the perfect site and building for a store/meeting place, bed & breakfast and center for outdoor activities (Nordic Center?) If properly thought out with careful “adaptive re-use” it would be a tremendous asset for the Town and could become a destination center for tourism with easy access to hunting, fishing, boating (kayak and canoe) and skiing (both Nordic and downhill).



The Methodist Chapel site

We believe this site of ~ .5 acres and building is owned by the Methodist Church. According to the revised edition of the Elgin Jones’ Marlow History, “Under the umbrella of the Methodist Church, it is currently owned and maintained by the Women’s Fellowship of Christian Services.” Originally known as “Jones’ Store” it was built in 1859 and moved to the current location around 1916 after the original building on the site burned. Along with the Fire Station, it is one of the most centrally located sites in the Village Center. Unfortunately, there is very limited space on the first floor. It is fine for a gathering space (which it is used for on Saturday mornings), but would need an addition to function well as a store and gathering space.



Zoning Recommendations

The team recognized that **existing zoning** in the target area might impede most recommendations:

Existing Zoning

- 1.0 acre required
- 175' frontage
- 2 parking spaces
- no manufactured housing
- restrictive regulations for accessory units

Almost all of the structures located on the properties in the Village area pre-exist the adoption of zoning regulations in the Town of Marlow. Based on the current zoning regulations ***almost every single existing structure violates the current zoning regulations.***

We assume that collectively, most of the structures in the village center have together created a desirable area that the town would like to, at a minimum maintain, and probably reinforce.

Style, size, location in relation to the streets and to each other—these are fundamental characteristics that create the *sense of place* that is Marlow's Center. So that this is not lost, and indeed is enhanced in the future, the team recommends that zoning be revised to ensure that any new development, renovations, and additions in this area can actually be done in a way that fits together with and reinforces the existing character.

The team recommends the Town look at changing zoning to

Recommended Village District Zoning

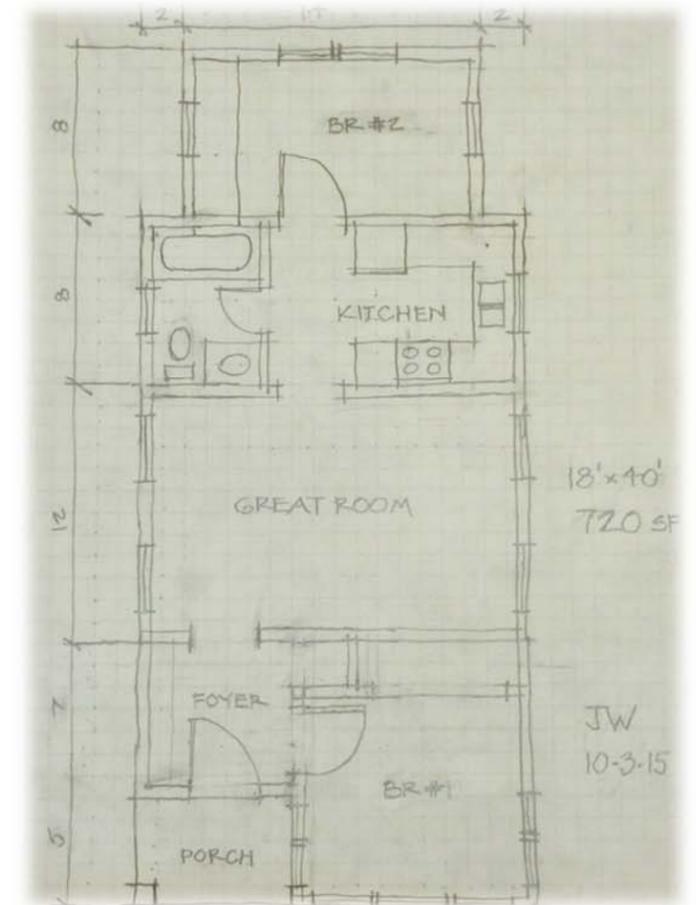
- 1/2 acre minimum lot size
- 75' frontage
- 30' front setback or consider a "build to" line that requires reinforcement of the street edge
- 15' side/rear setback
- Allow accessory units, duplex units, cottage units, mixed use, co-housing, manufactured housing



Cottages

In order to create more diversity in housing, as well as add density to the Village Center, the Town should consider allowing small, clustered cottage developments on existing Village lots.

These developments could be located near the trail network, allowing connectivity to other Village amenities. Single floor cottages could serve as a place for residents to age in place, and could easily be made accessible, while reinforcing the existing architectural theses of the Village.



Potential cottage development on Old Newport Road

Village Development Opportunities

There 3 or 4 properties that are located in or very close to the existing center that could be developed with cottages suitable for empty nesters, multifamily residential or residential above commercial to create the critical mass needed to support a couple of additional local businesses that the community could support.

Repurposing existing mill buildings into a “maker space,” available for small business startups would lend additional vitality to the Village Center.

Locating a store and gathering place in the center would also be an opportunity to construct additional trails and to connect existing trails making the Village the hub of what could become a major tourist amenity. Additional parking could be developed on the site of the existing fire station adjacent to the Odd Fellows Hall.

The existing picnic area at the Tin Shop Pond overlook on Route 10 could be improved with wayfinding and interpretive signage to serve as a gateway to the Village.

It would be important to ensure that any new infill structures close to the center of the village are placed on their sites in way that reinforces the street edge and contributes to “Placemaking”.



Providing Basic Services

Because of the location of the Center immediately adjacent to important water resources, it may not be feasible to locate the desired fuel facility in the Town Center even though one previously existed there.

The Town-owned property adjacent to the transfer station could be an acceptable site for an improved 12,000 SF Public Safety facility, and a fuel facility with access to Route 10 and adequate setbacks to the River and other important natural resources.



Summary of Recommendations and Next Steps

Start with what you have

You have a unique, charming village center that people from all over the world would love to see. (Note: people travel to visit places that are different and interesting to them. For people outside New England, Marlow reflects a past that many are nostalgic for, even if they have never been to the Northeast.)

Beautiful as it is, what brings people is *more people*.

Keep up your Christmas festival and other events that bring residents and visitors alike to the village center.

Consider the former store site or a similar centrally located property as a location to start a small store and coffee shop:

- Offer simple basics
- Fresh, local produce, milk, cheese and bread, etc. Newspapers.
- Not having cigarettes is not a bad thing and could signal who you are as a community.
- A good selection of craft beers and affordable good wines
- Include basic bicycle repair items and basic hiking items
- ASK people who bike and people who hike what they would like to see.
- Offer coffee and fresh fruit and pastries. Partner with Aaron's Place? A couple of small tables and chairs – outside in warm weather.
- Use Tin Shop Pond and the river nearby as focal points for small sitting/gathering areas
- Could the pond be used for intergenerational ice skating in the winter?
- If the store is not open, provide a small shed for footwear changing and hot cocoa.
- Build a small information kiosk out on Route 10, across the pond where the picnic tables now are. Let that be a place for visitors to find information about your history, about the little store, about trails, fishing and other outdoor activities available in Marlow, as well as any retail locations associated with your farms, artists, etc.

Build on your natural assets. For example:

- Bike, kayak and canoe rentals and tours
- Bed and breakfast/ Airbnb for active outdoors people, leaf peepers and other would-be visitors
- Retreat/meeting area for groups of different sizes
- Some landowners already allow snowmobiling on their properties – can these be expanded to four-season use?

Places to live

Marlow has an abundance of places to live – choices of location, size of home, what's allowed. We recognize that many homes are falling into disrepair. On the other hand, Marlow appears to be fairly open-minded about living arrangements for people within their homes.

As mentioned earlier, Boomers and Millennials alike prefer smaller, affordable and efficient homes:

- To rent or to own
- Single family, detached
- Multiple family
- Co-housing options (more than two unrelated people sharing a house)
- Accessory living units (There are a variety of ways to approach this)
- Needs to be a variety of design, e.g. one floor vs two
- Universal Design - accessible for those with mobility/sensory/cognitive issues

Build a small gas station on the property next to the transfer station. While being “in town” might be more ideal, the Pond and River waters would be too close for today’s standards.

Marlow also has a terrific can-do attitude. We also recommend:

- Clean up space between Tin Shop Pond and Route 10.
- Kiosk, picnic tables.
- Outdoor trails/access/use: bring all the organizations together who are related to these to work collaboratively towards a common vision/goal to promote and maintain these resources.
- Promote your volunteer network.
- Handyman services.
- Rides.
- Babysitting.
- Meals.

Going Forward

The time may come that, rather than put money into existing homes/houses, it would be better to build new.

We recommend that new building, for Millennials and Boomers alike, (for the foreseeable future) be in the already-denser village center – which is where most would prefer to be anyway. We also recommend considering smaller homes, grouped together. For example:

Cottage Court

- 4 cottages, 720 Square feet each
- 2 bedrooms each
- Rent less than \$1,000 per month
- All together on a half acre
- Community septic and well

This is an excellent investment opportunity – the numbers do work! And remember: high quality rental investment means high quality renters.

Market Marlow!

- Let people know what you have, why it’s such a great place to live, work, and play.
- Promote events through multiple channels.
- Formalize social networks through online platforms.

What to promote?

- Your history
 - The mills.
 - Local agriculture.
 - The move from up on the hill to where the center is today.
 - That you are on the historic and scenic College Highway.
- Your wonderful, small school and its curriculum.
- Your natural assets and how to get access to them.
- Active Millennials and Boomers alike would appreciate Marlow.
- Low real estate prices mean access to property for business start-ups, affordable places to live.

Other recommendations:

- Create a Blueway (similar to greenway) – connects waterways & helps promote the Ashuelot!
- Marlow could use a very nice campground, with hook ups and other amenities.
- Host outdoor events with a draw, like cross country bike races, hike-for-a-cause, more. Involve all the farms and artists in Marlow – these would be opportunities for them to market their own products.
- Leverage your arts community. Give them a chance to promote their work – and Marlow.
- Work with NHDOT to widen shoulders on major roads to allow for increased, safer pedestrian and bicycle use.

Potential Funding Sources

- USDA Rural Development
- Community Facilities Programs
- Rural Cooperative Development Grants
- Rural Business Development Grants
- Housing Programs
- Monadnock Community Development
- Transportation Alternatives Program
- Safe Routes to School
- State Aid Highway