PLAN NH
Visioning *for* Sustainable Communities

vibrant villages
new hampshire

# Application for 2014 Community Design Charrette Program

This proposal is hereby submitted on behalf of (Name of Organization Applying):

TOWN OF MARLOW

Name and Title of Officer Authorized to Sign: Robert A. E. Allen Selectmen

Signature of Officer Authorized to Sign

Mailing Address: 167 NH ROUTE 123

Town or City Name and Zip: MARLOW, NH 03456

Telephone: 603 446 2245 e-mail: townofmarlow@myfairpoint.net

What is the date of your latest Master Plan? 2003, 2013 in draft form

On separate pages, please address the following:

- **How would you describe the community project for which your group or town is asking Plan NH to provide planning assistance?** Please provide any appropriate information about the site's or area's geographical location, limits, and historic significance, current uses or unique features. Please indicate who owns or controls the use of the project site or area. How would the project enhance the health and vitality of your community?
- **Your town has four distinct, yet inextricably-linked sectors**: Social, economic, environmental and governance. What vision does your community have for each of these, and what kinds of recommendations (for the target area or project) coming from the charrette process could support these visions?
- **What forces of change** are occurring in your community that will need to be taken into consideration during the process?
- **Just as the four sectors (above) are interwoven,** different sections of your community are also inter-related. Looking at your target area/project, what influence might it have on other parts of town, and how do other part of town affect this target area? Further, does this target area have any influence or impact on your bordering towns, or do they have any influence or impact on this target area/project or your town in general?

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 Select Board, 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*.

Please submit your proposal **in PDF format** to r_leblanc@plannh.org

***no later than June 27, 2014.***

Please do not hesitate to call with any questions, or to discuss a project you have in mind: 603-452-7526.

**Town of Marlow, NH – Application for 2015-2016 Community Design Charrette**

**How would you describe the community project for which your Town is asking PLAN NH to provide planning assistance –?**

Marlow is located on the northern boundary of Cheshire County. With approximately 750 residents, it is one of NH many small, rural towns but has a unique character all its own. Situated on the upper ponds of the Ashuelot River, it has a rich history and scenic charm, having one of the most photographed views of the Towns historic Town Hall, Church and Odd Fellows Hall as seen across "Tin Shop" pond – so named for the black smith shop that was there for years. Marlow is also the home of the beginnings of PC Connection. In the early 1980's David Hall opened a small business in a room of the old woodworking/furniture mill building selling personal computers and making connecting cables. PC Connection still owns the mill in its entirety, the renovated "Christmas Trees Inn" across the pond and other land in town including a large parcel that the post office sits on and the former Town grocery store.

Marlow has for years studied and considered how to consolidate, improve and upgrade their Town services facilities including the aging fire station, as well as housing for police and ambulance services while maintaining the historic nature and charm of the rural community. Recently, the Town has lost its grocery store and gas station that was located in the geographic and social center of Town at the intersection of Rte. 10 and Rte. 123. The store and site were purchased by PC Connection several years ago, the gas station tanks removed and the store was closed down. It currently sits vacant. There is at least one informal group of residents advocating for and discussing how to bring back a store to Marlow and a lot of local support. With no store or gas station in Marlow, the nearest gas is in Keene 15 miles to the south or Goshen, 15 miles to the north. There is a store with limited items in Stoddard, 8 miles east on Rte. 123 up and over Pitcher Mountain – a difficult and challenging drive in the winter.

Marlow has recently acquired an 8.27 parcel of land from the State of New Hampshire on the west side of Rte. 10 just .5 mile north of the center of town and across the road from the property owned by PC Connection where the Post Office is located. There may be other sites that are options including possible land from PC Connection. For example, the Post Office site is mostly open and would/could make an ideal place for a store and future commercial development.

Marlow needs assistance in planning how to move forward with their immediate need/desire for a store and gas station as well as how this might integrate with upgrading town facilities and a site for future economic expansion. We need to know what our options might be and a "road map"/plan for making specific progress toward our goals. This project would bring new life into

our Town as well as economic opportunity. The store and gas station alone would offer obvious benefits to the Town and surrounding communities and would minimize travel and stress, as well as saving energy and time for the local residents.

**Social, Economic, Environmental and Governance**

Marlow has been successfully working to restore and maintain the social gathering places that are so important to the social health and interactions of the community. From our library to the Odd Fellows Hall, there are numerous organizations and gathering places that bring together and bind the community. These include the renovations for the old Grange Hall, social gatherings at the Church Chapel, and the fire station where the volunteers work and gather. A store would provide one of the key gathering places for the community as well as a location for information dissemination. Renovating or building a new fire station/municipal center would go even further to unite the community and offer a venue for all sorts of education and entertainment functions.

Marlow is a community of hard working folks with very little local economic opportunities, requiring the townspeople to travel out of the area for work and other resources (leisure and entertainment opportunities). Marlow's population as remained fairly static for years since the local operation of PC Connection left Marlow, taking the employees with it. It is interesting to note that there was a growth spurt in the 1980's when PC grew and expanded in Marlow employing many local and area residents and bringing people in to Marlow as residents. Proper and careful economic development might be a boon to Marlow if it can be done in the context of the nature and historical setting of the Town.

The environment is a key factor for the Town in many ways. Besides the imperative that everyone should share to protect and enhance our natural environment for our future and our children, we are nestled in and around the Ashuelot River and its ponds which are excellent for fishing and boating. Healthy air, water and land is a legacy and a resource to be protected and cherished.

Marlow's governance consists (as many small towns do) of a Board of Selectmen, three in number, an Executive Administrator that assists the Selectmen, a Planning Board and a Zoning Board. There are also numerous committees and groups overseeing various Town operations and programs. There is probably no finer example of democracy in action than the rural/small town governing systems of New England. The people of New Hampshire's small towns could not have more direct and immediate interaction with their local governments.

**Forces of Change**

The forces of change that Marlow is facing and will continue to face are probably very similar to those that most towns and villages face – an aging population; controlled growth and development in the context of the nature and character of the community; energy concerns and issues (availability, shortages, rising costs etc.); climate change with its implications for storms, travel, agriculture, and the changing environment. The issue of our aging population would or could be especially aided by the development of the store, gas station and possible location for a community center.

**Influences on the whole Town and surrounding Communities**

Sections of the Community and surrounding areas/communities would clearly be impacted in a positive way with the reestablishment of a store and gas station center as well as the possibility of a municipal/community center. The very discussion of where to locate these entities is informed by the distribution and locations of the Townspeople as well as the travel and accessibility for people from surrounding communities and folks traveling through Marlow. Bringing people together to meet, interact and share information will make the Town and the Community in general stronger and more cohesive.