

# Workforce Housing Design Charrette

for

## Gosling Meadows

A family community owned and operated by the Portsmouth Housing Authority



# OPTIMA

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Portsmouth, NH - October 20 & 21, 2016

# Gosling Meadows Design Charrette

A project of the Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast



# Charrette Process

## WHC Holds Design Charrette

The Workforce Housing Coalition (WHC) of the Greater Seacoast held a workforce housing design charrette in Gosling Meadows, located in Portsmouth, NH on October 20 & 21. The Charrette included a site walk, community dialogue session, and design workshop, culminating in a design reveal on October 21. This is the Coalition's sixth annual design charrette.

## Design Process for Workforce Housing

The charrette is an intensive design process in which designers, planners, property owners, city representatives, and other stakeholders collaborate to create a conceptual vision of a development that includes homes for the "missing middle" and affordable to people who work in the community.

A WHC design charrette is a unique opportunity to:

- Envision workforce housing developments possible under current regulations
- Suggest modifications to current regulations to better suit workforce housing development
- Test the financial feasibility of the design concepts
- Provide options to decision-makers for potential development of the subject sites

The charrette process can be summarized in nine steps:

1. Identify the study area
2. Reach out to property owners and stakeholders
3. Research the study area
4. Recruit volunteer design teams
5. Walk the site with owners and stakeholders
6. Listen to needs and concerns of all stakeholders
7. Create design options by a volunteer team
8. Present designs and recommendations to all stakeholders
9. Prepare a summary publication with recommendations

Our charrette team composed of volunteer professionals included planners, real estate agents, architects, bankers, landscape architects, civil engineers, developers, and construction estimators.

Gosling Meadows Charrette team members are professionals who volunteer their time. They contribute an average of 14 hours to the Gosling Meadows charrette process. This effort amounted to over 335 volunteer hours of professional talent and time put into the Gosling Meadows project.

# Charrette Team

## Design Lead

Jack Mettee,  
Mettee Planning Consultants

## Facilitator

Maria Sillari

## History Overview

Caitlyn Thayer, Portsmouth  
Chamber of Commerce

## Housing Overview

George Reagan, NH Housing  
Finance Authority

## Scribe

Victoria Parmele

## Design Team

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## Finance & Feasibility Facilitator

Michael Castagna,  
Castagna Consulting Group

## Finance & Feasibility Team

Marty Chapman,  
The Housing Partnership  
Ute Luxem, Profile Bank  
Jamie Thompson, Eastern Bank  
Joe Horvath, Optima Bank  
Ralph Pope, Coldwell Banker  
Residential Banker  
Peter Deeley, Coldwell Banker  
Residential Banker

## Report Publication Design

Molly Martuscello

## Special Recognition

Thank you to the Portsmouth  
Housing Authority and City of  
Portsmouth!

# Charrette Mission



The charrette program is dedicated to transforming the way people work together by broadening capacity for collaboration. It is a tool to accelerate a collaborative, design based process that harnesses the talents and energies of all interested stakeholders, to create and support a feasible plan of a mixed-use, mixed-market village that provides revenue to enable the construction of middle-market workforce housing, while diversifying the community.

Achieved by:

- Expanding the number of housing units from 130 to approximately 200
- Providing opportunities for some market rate housing and for intergenerational housing
- Encouraging connections to adjacent retail and commercial neighborhoods through walking/biking paths and convenient bus routes/schedule
- Providing easy access to both employment and shopping opportunities
- Providing amenities and programs for all the community's residents
- Making the "new village" a great place for children: appropriate recreation facilities and opportunities for age appropriate programs, etc
- Adding value to the community through some business, office, retail opportunities- medical offices/health services, coffee shop, professional offices. This will "monetize the location"

# Housing in Portsmouth

The median household income for owner occupied homes in Portsmouth is \$95,000 (ACS data 2010-2014) not enough for a household to afford the \$365,000 median purchase price of a home. Single family home sales remain strong, although inventory is declining as home prices continue to trend upward, surpassing the pre-recession (2008-2011) high point of \$318,000. Demand for rental units is also strong. Median gross rent (rent + 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.

More than half of Portsmouth's population obtains housing by renting. This trend translates into more demand for workforce housing for a younger working population with different wants and needs in housing than prior generations.

Despite the minimal population growth in Portsmouth, there continues to be problems with housing affordability in the city. More than 43% of Portsmouth's renting households are classified as overburdened. An overburdened household is one that pays more than 30% of its income on housing costs. Furthermore, while there were significant increases to household income for homeowners and renters in Portsmouth over the past decade, this didn't match increased housing costs. Rents on average have been consistently higher in Portsmouth than in other parts of the state or Seacoast region.

# Gosling Meadows At A Glance

- Located on Gosling Road, Gosling Meadows is owned and operated by the Portsmouth Housing Authority (PHA)
- The PHA is the largest landlord in the City of Portsmouth and the provider of housing to nearly 5% of the city's population
- The Gosling Meadows family development is a 124 unit public housing community
- Consists of 12 one bedroom units; 50 two bedroom units; 51 three bedroom units; and 11 four bedroom units
- The property was built in 1959 and has undergone several modernization programs
- There are 6 units designed for use by the disabled; 1 four bedroom; 3 two bedrooms and 2 one bedroom units
- There are numerous walkways and sidewalks, as well as recreation areas, all in close proximity to public transportation and local employment (Housing Authority Annual Report 2016)



# Site Walk Observations - October 20th 3:30 - 4:30pm

- 11 acre site; the last lot in Portsmouth before Newington
- The site contains fill used to construct the Spaulding Turnpike; was farmland with lots of wetland behind it to the east
- The site doesn't connect with the rest of Portsmouth. The playground is used. The field is too small - a goal is to create more space for more recreational opportunities
- Traffic count = 16,000-17,000 cars per day on Gosling Road
- The site is a high value piece of real estate. The question is: how to monetize it in order to be able to do all kinds of things and have choices?
- Possible mixed use, including a community college, health clinic, and business offices
- About 180 kids live in Gosling Meadows
- A largely invisible community in Portsmouth
- Gosling Meadows is the closest housing to Pease
- Good proximity to retail stores nearby but, not that walkable because of traffic
- COAST bus is used a fair amount. Enclosed bus stop will open shortly on Gosling Rd in front of the neighborhood
- A new sidewalk was recently installed along Gosling Road
- About 400 people are on waiting list for the PHA housing
- Condition of housing is pretty good. Repairs are done continually and usually are large projects that include: roofs, stairs, and ramps
- Asbestos, mostly in floors, is being replaced gradually
- Community garden space is encouraged including a vegetable garden
- Need to know the number of parking spaces
- Interior streets are city maintained streets, including snow plowing, trash removal
- The Gosling Meadows neighborhood is getting better in terms of social capital, compared to some years back. Soft policing as well as hard policing occur. Numerous video cameras are on the site
- It should be a great place to be a kid
- Some people in Portsmouth don't want to see housing there anymore
- The recreation center isn't open enough. There are plans to expand resident services (a grant was recently received)
- A mobile medical clinic comes to the site (was there during site visit), but no mobile library comes there



# Site Walk Observations - October 20th 3:30 - 4:30pm

- Idea of a 4-way stop at one of entrances to Gosling Meadows (below power lines) would be a good thing but difficult to do because of the power lines
- Gosling Meadows can be connected to the rest of Portsmouth via a trail in the wetland area
- Could there be a bike trail as part of a system that comes out at traffic circle near Liquor store
- What is the possible workforce housing connection to Gosling Meadows? Bring workforce housing into the mix, with mixed-use development of some kind. This would allow monetizing of a project. More money is needed in order to focus on the needs of kids living there. Great location to do commercial development of some kind
- Pease employees possible candidates for workforce housing at Gosling Meadows
- Question – could this be a blank slate for redesigning the site. Could phasing be done, so residents could be moved around while work was being done



- Suggestion – go to three story buildings, leaves land for landscaping, design of safe outdoor spaces
- The development doesn't meet current zoning, but allowing more density is not an issue with city
- Discussion on current parking compared to possible parking expansion
- Being able to go to work without having to drive is positive
- Some beautiful trees on the site
- Activation of the residential uses with design, and non-residential uses in a way that isn't contrived – live and work spaces, repair shops for bikes, etc., other services, art related uses

# Public Listening Session - October 20th 6:00 - 8:00pm

## Residents Like

### Playground

- Liked the park, and would like it to be bigger
- Good to have more playgrounds, which are spread out evenly on the property instead of being on one side of it
- Want more playground equipment

### Gardening

- Liked having their own gardening space
- Liked that they can do what they want concerning gardening
- Resident noted that she had flower boxes and it would be nice to get some help with purchasing materials
- A resident said there are more gardens at Gosling Meadows than ever, and once people had started gardening, it spread
- Some people can't afford to get started
- Interest in having vegetable plots, fruit trees was expressed

## Residents Want

- Residents want more parking
- Each person living there gets one parking space, and the space isn't always close to the apartment
- Parking should be available at the unit
- Storage sheds are needed so they can put away bikes, etc. so they won't get stolen. Kids steal other kids' stuff, then leave it all over the neighborhood
- Trash needs to be picked up more often and there should be more than one recycling bin
- There should be better organized bike racks
- There should be more trees – some have been cut down
- Several residents suggested a skate board park



## Design Considerations

### Traffic

- A resident noted that there are a lot of little kids, and people sometimes speed through the site on the interior roads. A design is needed that will force cars to slow down.
- Another resident suggested there should be a fence along Wedgwood to prevent kids from running out into the road
- Speed bumps are needed
- A team member noted that Gosling Road is a busy road, and suggested that if parking could be put near that road on the outside of the site, it could provide a buffer from the traffic noise and danger. He said there could then be a more walkable center, with no cars

### Transportation

- A number of residents can't get out and about much because they don't have a car

### Shopping

Some residents said they have pretty good access to grocery stores – Trader Joe's, Market Basket, Shaw's, etc





## More points of interest

- The Playground needs clean-up
- We have to address the drug dealing
- Need an improved community center
- Need programs for middle and High School kids
- Space to make videos
- Keep own yards
- We like that our homes are not stacked on top of each other
- Homes and business may not mix
- Need programs and outside groups at the “Rec Center”
- Do not want outside people in the neighborhoods, but some kinds of businesses may be okay
- Use open space for sports fields
- Need on-site day care
- Don’t like that all of the houses look the same, and are the same color

# Residents Discussion

## Mixed Use

Robin described the idea of keeping the current number of residential units and adding some retail uses on the site. There was concern that this would mean there would be more strangers coming in and out and retail businesses would create more traffic.

Robin noted the approach used at Strawberry Bank of putting small, owner operated businesses (not retail) on the top floor with residential below.

A resident said she didn't think this would be a big problem for the residents, other than parking conflicts. But she said she didn't think it was a good idea to mix retail/office uses with residential because of the drug problems, crime, kids unattended, etc. She said she didn't think the uses would mesh well.

There was discussion on possible uses in a building(s) on the site that could draw isolated residents out of their apartments:

- Adult education/ cooking classes
- Drug and Alcohol rehabilitation
- Medical/dental office
- Daycare
- Places for kids to play
- Exercise classes, basketball.

A design team member said rather than thinking about the negative impact on residents of possible retail uses, they all should be thinking about what services retail businesses

could provide for the residents. She said there were ways to make things work. A resident said programs are especially needed for older kids, and said a lot of them don't have outlets right now.

## Resident Services

There was discussion with residents about possibly having daycare services on the site, and having classes for kids and adults.

A resident said kids would flock to the community center if there were more activities/programs. There was discussion about whether a building larger than the community center would be needed for this.

A design team member asked whether there was a way to connect Gosling Meadows with the rest of the city, this would allow residents to have access to other programs. A resident said if there were more opportunities, residents might grab them.

A design team member said if there was a recreational structure and activities, someone would need to run it. It was noted that the person wouldn't need to do this full time, and that college students might assist with this.



# Residents Discussion

## Community Design

A resident said if the existing units were torn down and a big apartment building was built on the site, she didn't think the residents would get along.

A design team member explained that big box apartment buildings were considered to be antiquated. She said the designers were thinking about the layout in terms of what affected the kids. She said safety concerning cars was one thing, and another was how kids interacted in their environment.

She said the designers could help create better, more contained outdoor spaces that enabled mothers to network, allowed the community to pitch in to watch over the kids.

There was discussion on possible renovation of the housing units. A resident said she didn't like it that all of the buildings looked the same, and also said she would like it if units looked like townhouses rather than low income housing.

There was discussion about whether there is currently a sense of community. A resident said many people stayed to themselves. She said she knew the people in her building and shared maintenance of the yard, babysitting with them, but that was it. She said one of the issues at times was a lack of parenting.

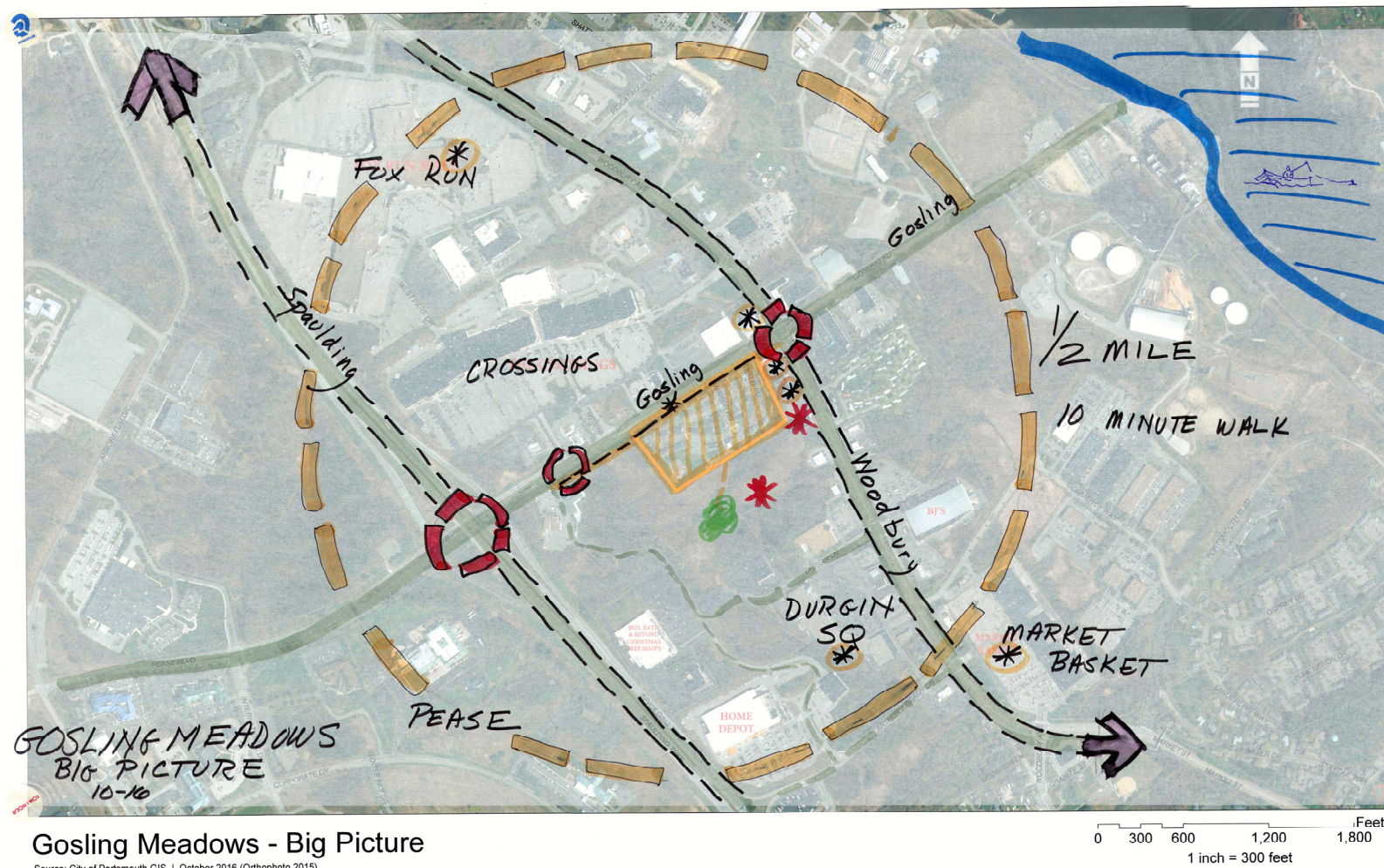
# Design Team



# Reveal Report- October 21, 2016 6:00pm - 8:00pm

At the conclusion of the design portion of the charrette, the team presented its findings to the Gosling Meadows community. Recommendations are proposed in three phases to allow change to occur over an extended period of time

Contextualizing the site - how this community faces the larger community. Congestion, traffic, make the community isolated. But some residents are in fact employed nearby -within half mile of Gosling Meadows. There is a need for improved connections, so it can be more part of the larger community

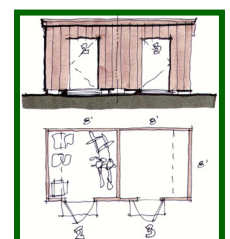
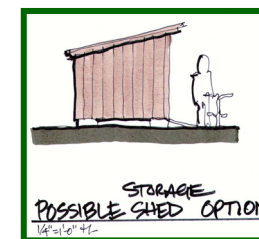
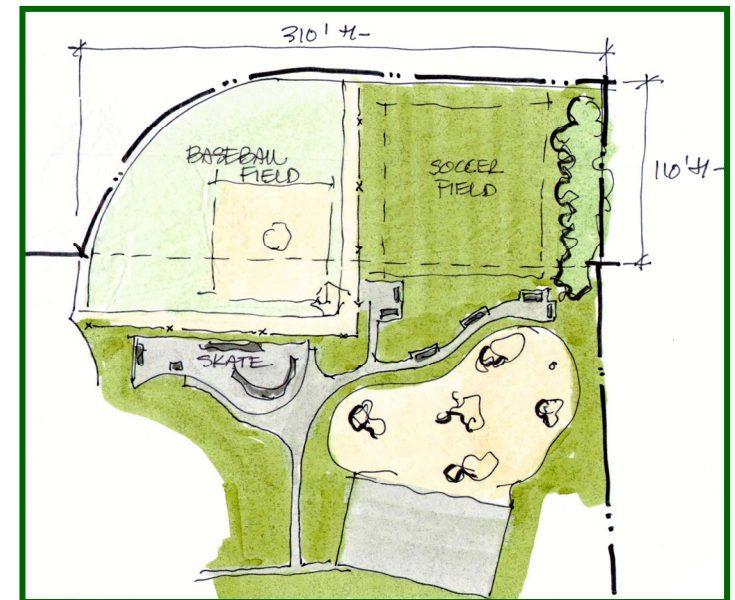
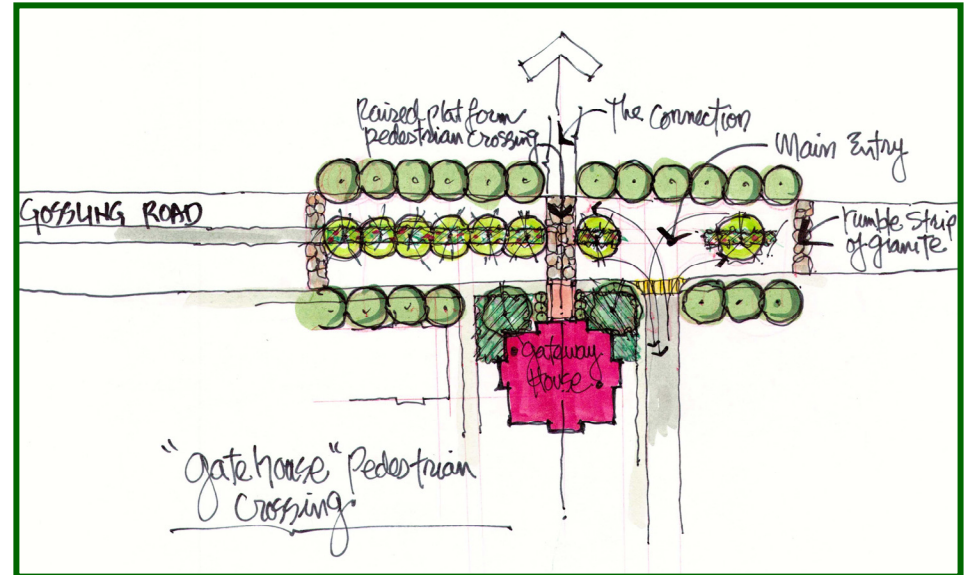


Gosling Meadows - Big Picture

Source: City of Portsmouth GIS | October 2016 (Orthophoto 2015)

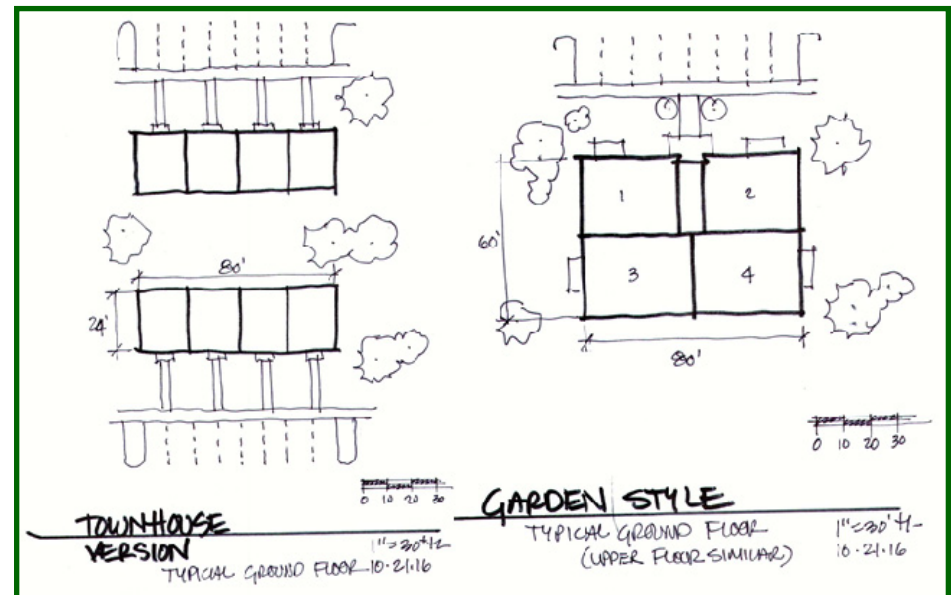
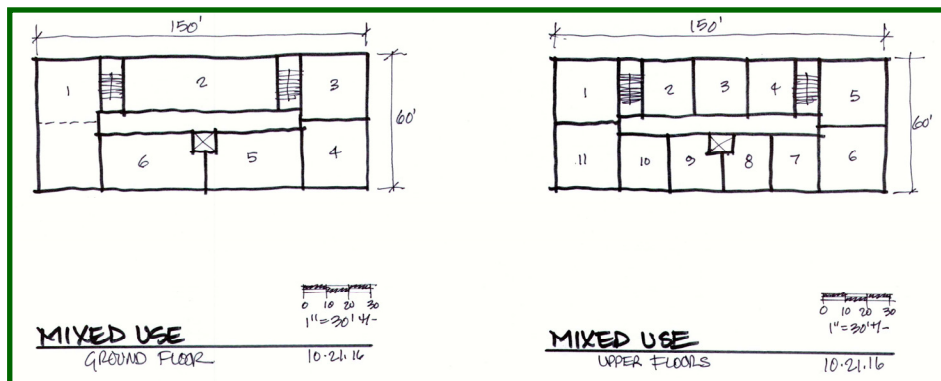
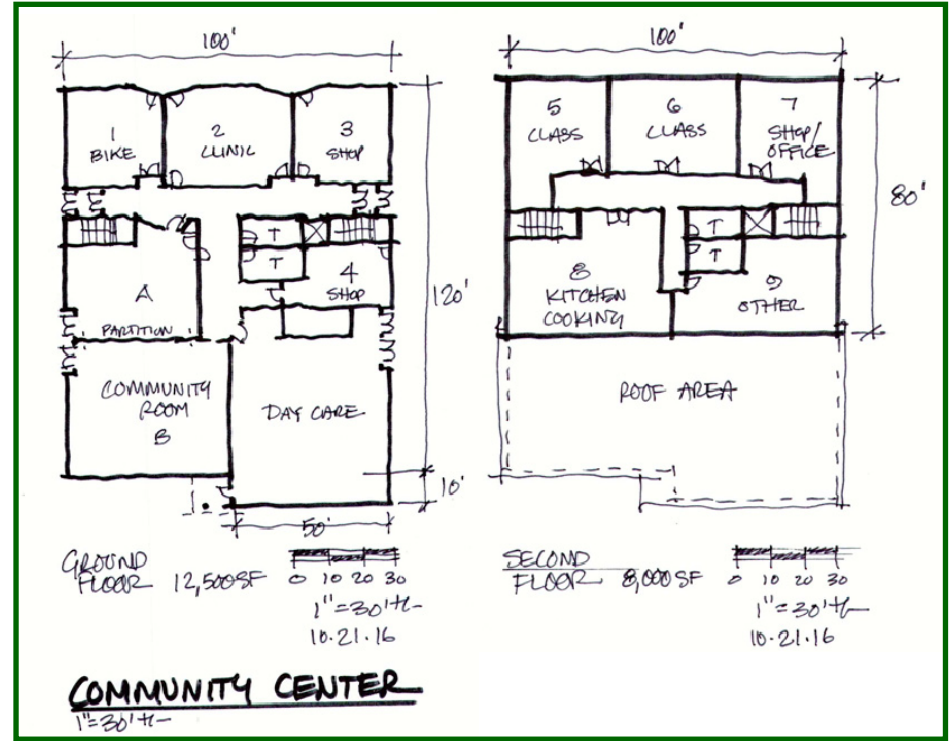
# Phase 1 - Short Term

- Establish safe pedestrian connection to malls
- Walkways on the site need to be reorganized, provided closer to entries, opening up more space
- Provide washers/dryers in community center
- Tree planting
- Install skate park
- Recycling place
- Address sociocultural issues at Gosling Meadows
- Containers closer to residences
- Possible recycling at the community center
- Reorganize parking – eliminate internal lots, create more space for kids to play. There could be a net gain, going from 190 to 218 spaces
- Playground cleanup – organize cleanup effort soon involving residents
- Reorganize/upgrade playground. Possibly use some wetland to expand it
- Create outdoor patio spaces using concrete pavers; install barbecues, make patio areas places for people to gather together
- Existing community center – changes made here can set the stage for the next level of development of the site. Partition existing building for different uses – educational, cooking, and parenting classes; visiting medical services; laundry center; play areas
- Install sheds for bikes, etc. where appropriate. The sheds could help define the spaces for gardens, etc.



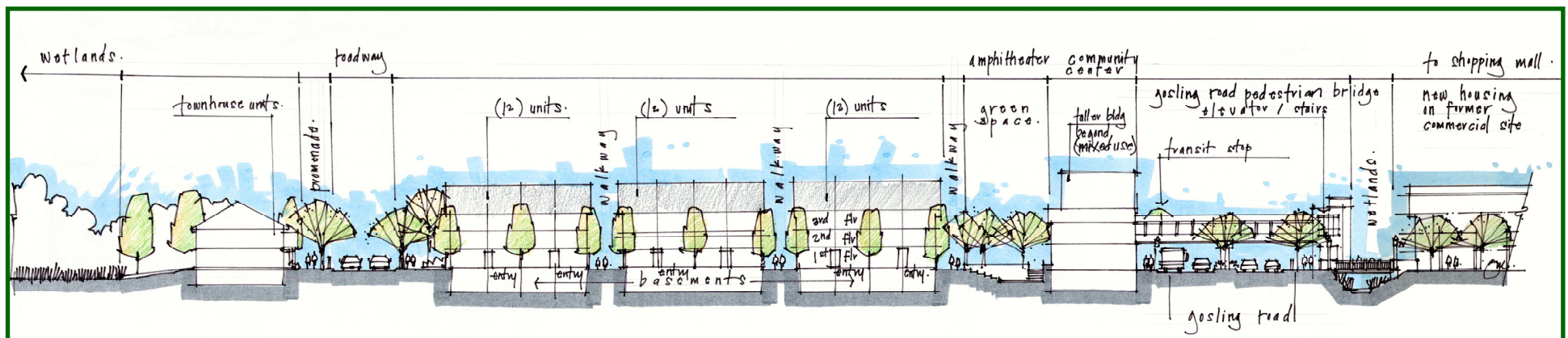
# Phase 2 - Medium Term

- Build new community center close to Gosling Road. A symbol of the Gosling Meadows community. Could be an adjunct location for college classes, a medical clinic that would be used by Gosling Meadows residents and other residents.
- Existing community center could become a repair space, training center, etc.
- Residential unit buildings and outdoor space designed better
- Module units with head in parking, greenspace, porch area, as well as an activated backyard – creates different spaces for different age groups. Variety of housing types
- Minimize design variation between subsidized and non-subsidized units
- Better circulation design for the site
- Community green space for larger events; also satellite park
- Buildings should transition from larger to smaller, starting from Gosling Road



# Phase 3 - Long Term

- New mixed use development along Gosling Meadows can add a lot more residential units
- It will screen the entire site and develop an interface with Gosling Road
- Retail on first floor, facing out and residential on upper floors facing in
- Buildings should be ADA compliant and have elevators
- Micro lofts can be built to fill housing need in the community
- Gosling Road can be turned into an asset rather than barrier by changing its character - it can be made into a local connector, instead of its current character as a fast track road
- Buildings at Gosling Rd should be tall enough to allow a connector across Gosling Road



# Financial Feasibility

## Budget

### Phase I: Short Term Projects

1000LF of new sidewalks, create new green space	\$ 145,000
20 new trees	\$ 15,000
Lighting	\$ 15,000
Reconfigure Parking, New pavement	\$ 25,000
800SF of new patios	\$ 50,000
62-8x16 storage sheds	\$ 100,000

### Phase II: Garden Style and Townhouse Units

19 New Townhouse buildings total 76 units, (1500sf living space)	\$17,100,000
4 Garden Style buildings, total 128 units (1200SF living space)	\$23,000,000
Infrastructure costs, roads, utilities, green space	\$ 750,000

### Phase III: Community Center, Mixed use facilities

New Community Center (20,500SF)	\$ 3,590,000
3 Mixed use buildings, 81,000sf housing, (27,000SF Retail/commercial)	\$14,850,000
On & Offsite improvements: Gosling Rd & Bridge	\$ 1,800,000

## Social Capital Grants & Foundations for Economic Development

- [Wal-Mart Good Works](#)
- [The Home Depot – Community Impact Grants](#)
- [The Ford Foundation](#)
- [Eversource – Community Giving program](#)
- [The Allstate Foundation](#)
- [The Verizon Foundation](#)
- [Merck Family Fund](#)
- [New England Grassroots Environment Fund](#)
- [Enterprise Community Partners](#)
- [New Hampshire Parks](#)
- [American Heritage Preservation Grants](#)
- [Economic Development Assistance Programs](#)
- [Rural Business Enterprise Grant Programs](#)
- [Transportation Enhancement Act Program](#)
- [Waste Management Charitable Giving Program](#)
- [Economic Development Assistance Programs](#) - Availability of Funds under the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965
- [The Timberland Company – Community Involvement Program](#)
- [Orton Family Foundation](#)—Heart & Soul Community Planning
- The Madeline G. von Weber Trust - Contact: Madeline G. von Weber Trust, c/o James d. Dow, 95 Market St., Manchester, NH 03101



# Timeline

## Short Term: 1-5 years

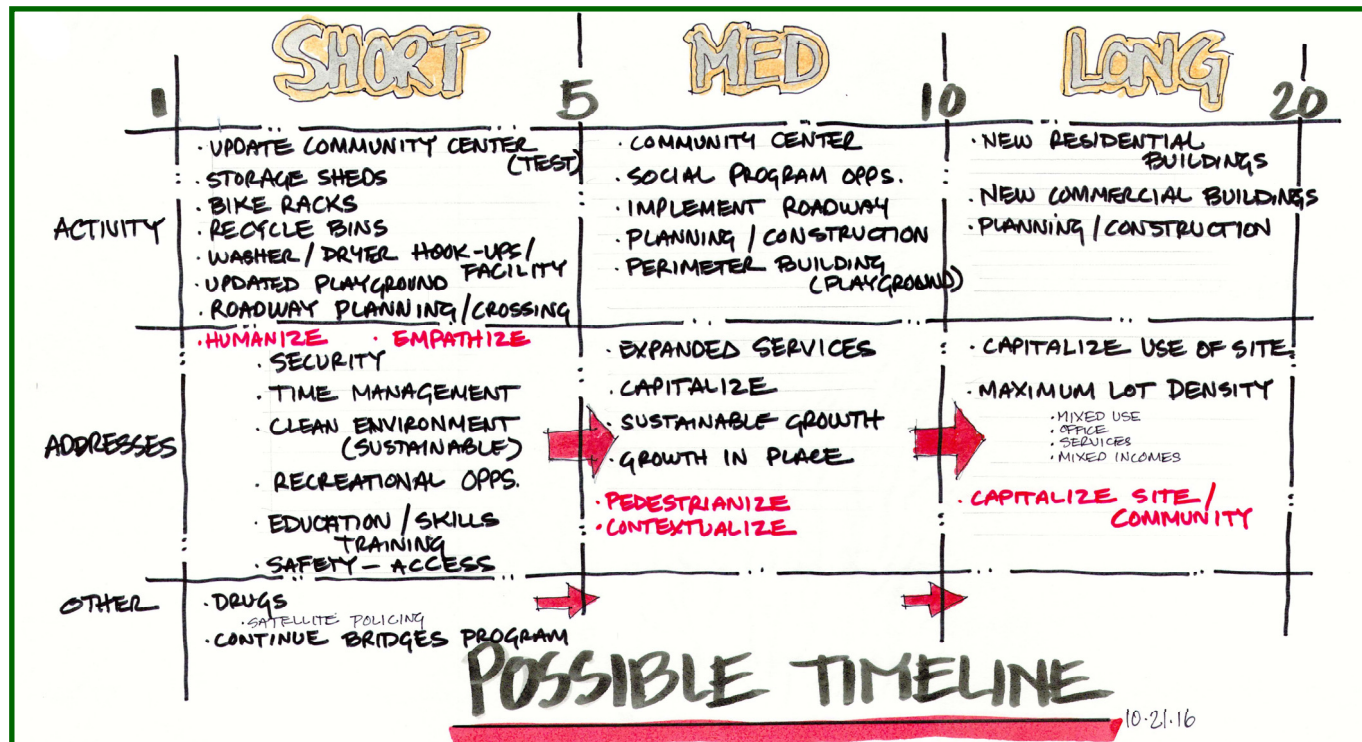
Humanize Gosling Meadows, provide greater security, help residents with tools, and time management. Update the community center, with input from residents. Costs for sheds, etc. in Phase 1 is about \$350,000. The short term improvements can be broken into segments. Utilize various social capital options to achieve improvements; Timberland, City Year, Lowes, Home Depot, Eversource volunteers, charitable giving, and various grants.

## Medium Term: 5-10 years

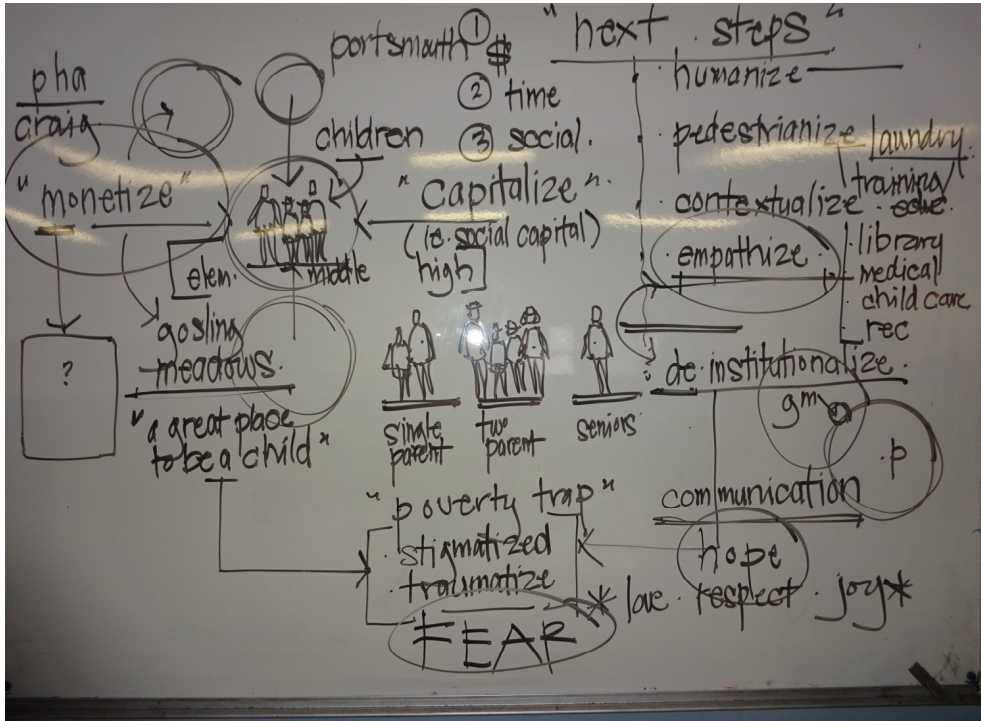
New community center built and begin to replace existing residential units with new units. Traffic calming reconstruction of Gosling Meadows Rd (treat it like a main street, and connect to the other side of the road).

## Long Term: 10-20 years

Construct new commercial and residential spaces, including affordable and market rate housing. This mix of uses will provide added revenue that can be placed back into the site for resident services and facilities. The revenue will drive the phasing. Tax credits can be used for new housing. The income stream generated will be self-sustaining.



# Charrette Process Photos



## Recycling:

Ask Department of Public Works (DPW) to assist with containers at Community Center & Parking lot

## Fight crime/opoid abuse:

- Ask police/housing authority to
  - o increase presence
  - o Pop officer options
  - o ways to communicate without creating neighborhood tensions

## Skate park:

not addressed  
injury risk  
liability issues



# Workforce Housing

## What is workforce housing?

Workforce housing includes single family homes, townhouses, condominiums and apartments that are affordable to low and moderate income households. To be affordable, monthly housing costs shouldn't demand more than 30% of gross household income. To close the widening gap between incomes and housing costs, some developers/owners utilize subsidy or tax credit programs.

The Workforce Housing Coalition defines workforce housing as for-sale housing which is affordable to a 4 person household earning no more than 100% of median area income or rental housing which is affordable to a 3 person household earning no more than 60% of median area income. A healthy and vibrant community with strong eco-systems is filled with all generations of the workforce. The faces of that workforce include empty nesters to young professionals and they are often nurses and doctors, teachers, and first responders. Insuring these members of community, who provide the benefits and services we associate with a desirable place to live and work, live and give to the community as their home, will insure they are able to engage and contribute in all the ways we need for healthy social, cultural and economic systems.

## Who needs workforce housing?

The greater seacoast of New Hampshire and Southern Maine is one of the least affordable regions in the country. Many people cannot afford to live in the communities in which they work, so they endure long commutes. Some people move away, leaving employers who are unable to hire and retain the workers needed to sustain and grow their businesses.

## What does workforce housing look like?

Workforce housing is based on good design and minimal impact. Workforce Housing includes small, mixed-income developments that are distributed throughout a town. Developments in suburban settings are clustered to leave areas of open space. Compared to unplanned sprawl, such land use is much more efficient and attractive.

## Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast

With the support of our members and sponsors, the WHC tackles complex issues that contribute to the region's limited housing options.

We offer planners and developers advice and resources on how to meet the housing need. Through our annual design charrettes, we inspire dialogue and generate concept designs that include innovative ways to increase the local supply of workforce housing.

We envision an adequate supply of affordable, desirable housing throughout the greater seacoast region that provides opportunities for area workers to put down roots, creating a more diverse community that benefits us all.

Since the Coalition's inception in 2001, we have helped nearly two dozen communities in the seacoast region of New Hampshire and southern Maine to improve their housing regulations. In turn, local developers have created over 350 new units of workforce housing.

The lack of an adequate and balanced supply of housing poses a threat to the region's economic health. Addressing this issue requires that a broad range of individuals, organizations, and public officials become engaged in efforts to change attitudes towards housing development.

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Support the Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast and help to promote a friendlier climate for workforce housing development in the greater seacoast, for more information visit [www.seacoastwhc.org](http://www.seacoastwhc.org)



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