



*Dover, New Hampshire*

## **Chapter 9**

### **Strategic Alliances**

For some communities their strongest ally in developing housing solutions may be a new partner: a private developer, a church, a business, a local hospital, a school, or an environmental organization. Throughout New Hampshire communities have found that creating effective strategies to address their needs, including the need for affordable housing, requires the engagement and resources of many individuals and interest groups. In some cases the allies may even come from neighboring communities. This has proved to be advantageous for many community needs, and could be part of the solution to New Hampshire's existing housing challenge.

#### **Developers**

The majority of housing units being created in New Hampshire are being designed and constructed by private developers, both for profit and non-profit. Involving developers in regulatory discussions can help a community understand what tools it will need to create the range of housing units that a community desires. Identifying areas that can accommodate higher densities, the range of housing that can be allowed by right, and understanding how barriers in the regulatory process can be removed will help a community encourage a healthy range of unit types. This increase in units created by developers will meet the market needs, and remove some of the pressure on existing lower priced units.

#### **Employer Assisted Housing**

Employer assisted housing programs provide financial, and technical assistance, to help employees locate or afford suitable housing. Such programs may take the form of a forgivable, deferred, or repayable second loan; a grant; a matched savings plan; or homebuyer education. An employer may also provide

financial assistance to renters by providing, or guaranteeing, the payment of security deposits and last month's rent where required.

Though still fairly rare, this benefit was common in the past, and is growing in popularity in many parts of the country where housing is scarce and prices are high. There are two roles for a community that wishes to use this approach to help address its affordable housing needs. The first is to promote the use of this by employers in the community. The second is to encourage new employers relocating to the area to collaborate with a community to address housing needs. Beyond assisting their own employees, some employers may even be encouraged to provide land or other support for the community's housing efforts, if there is a clear vision and an identified need they can help meet. FannieMae can provide free technical assistance, including a full set of planning steps and model documents on setting up EAH programs.

### **Town/Gown Collaborations**

New Hampshire's college and university communities face a unique set of housing challenges. Collaboration between communities and colleges or universities in the support of affordable housing can be mutually beneficial. When a community engages the local school or university in a number of ways related to the local housing situation, they can be part of a solution that addresses broader needs as well. Getting college or university leaders drawn into the discussion and involved in a local housing organization is a positive step.

#### **Park & Wheelock Rental Housing ~ Hanover, New Hampshire**

This residential infill project was developed on an existing site at the corner of South Park and East Wheelock Streets in Hanover. This new development created a more dense and diverse neighborhood by combining 16 existing units and 22 new multi-family units. Developed and owned by Dartmouth College primarily for faculty and staff, this rental housing includes duplexes, four-plexes, and one eight-unit building.

Located in the downtown area of Hanover, this development provides affordable housing for a segment of the local population that needs it, and can make good use of being located within walking distance to both the downtown and the College campus. This reduces the amount of vehicle trips on local roads.

#### *Contact Information:*

Dartmouth College Real Estate Office  
7 Lebanon Street - Suite 303  
Hanover, NH 03755  
603-646-2446  
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Sometimes isolated from their surrounding neighborhoods, and sometimes overpowering them, higher education facilities present wonderful opportunities for collaboration. They are a powerful institutional presence, usually with influential leadership. Often, they are highly visible property owners and developers, and their policies and activities affect surrounding housing markets and land uses. Students living off-campus exacerbate housing supply problems in many neighborhoods. Academic institutions can also be helpful researching issues and crafting solutions. Their students and faculty are valuable resources for New Hampshire communities.

### **Affordable Housing and Historic Preservation**

The historic preservation movement in New Hampshire has been a strong partner for affordable housing advocates over the years. Preservation and adaptive reuse interests should be involved in your housing organization, or committee, and can provide a valuable perspective as you monitor properties and explore the possibility of creating additional housing units in your community. These interests have produced successful collaborations in many communities, and often bring complementary financial tools and resources to the table.

Throughout New Hampshire schools, mills, industrial sites, commercial buildings, churches, and other properties have been transformed into affordable housing. The residential reuse of these vacant, or underutilized, properties has transformed neighborhoods and spurred redevelopment activity while providing quality affordable housing. These efforts should be viewed as mending and contributing to the fabric of the community.

Collaboration on historic preservation projects is not always easy. Depending on the needs of the structure, the extent of the renovation, the timeline for the project, and the associated costs, it may become too costly per square foot to create housing units.

#### **Dow Academy ~ Franconia, NH**

When Dow Academy no longer had a use for this structure, and several associated outbuildings, their future was uncertain. Located in the heart of Franconia Village, these structures were converted to a mix of commercial and residential uses.

Condominiums now fill the main school building, with office space in the lower levels, and residential units in the upper stories. This housing, adjacent to a town park and a short walk from the village center, has been a positive addition to the mix of unit types in Franconia, and has proven to be valuable in increasing activity in the village center. This reuse also helped preserve this important structure which is a key feature of the village.



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Town of Franconia  
421 Main Street  
Franconia, NH 03580  
603-823-7752

## Drewsville Manor ~ Walpole, New Hampshire

Completed in 1997 by Southwestern Community Services, the Drewsville Manor contains five affordable apartments ranging in size from one to three bedrooms. Located on the common in Walpole's historic Drewsville Village, the manor's new role in the community as a source of affordable housing units also preserved the structure itself. The project was made possible through a combination of low income housing tax credits and federal preservation tax credits.



Community Development Block Grant funds and funding from the Town of Walpole were then used to rehabilitate the carriage house which now houses the Head Start program.

### *Contact Information:*

Southwestern Community Services  
69-Z Island Street - Keene, NH 03431-0603  
603-352-7512  
[www.scshehelps.org/](http://www.scshehelps.org/)

## Affordable Housing With Conservation

Forging alliances with conservation groups to create or preserve affordable housing can be a win-win approach.

Such collaborations often involve limited development, development with conservation restrictions attached, farm acquisitions where the buildings are maintained or reused as housing, or the transfer of development rights. Conservation groups should regularly be represented in housing partnerships or committees. Working together, and using limited resources wisely, the two groups can forge strategies that increase the supply of affordable housing, where it is most suitable, while preserving critical natural resources elsewhere in the community. With increased focus on community preservation and smart growth, housing advocates and conservationists in many cities and towns are seeking opportunities where their limited financial resources can go twice as far by preserving both open space and affordable housing.

This may be a hard sell initially. Conservation groups have a specific focus, and this effort will be asking them to broaden their focus to also encompass housing needs that are important to the community. By meeting dual community objectives, they may be able to get involved in the protection of key areas on a greater number of parcels in their area. This strategy also provides an opportunity for developers to become engines for conservation.

## **Regional Approaches**

Promoting collaboration between neighboring communities to address regional housing needs is an approach that some New Hampshire communities have started to use. Regional cooperation is essential if problems resulting from fragmented land use planning and local decision making are to be dealt with appropriately. Regional planning commissions are a wonderful place to begin this dialogue. In several communities the impetus for collaboration has come from the housing non-profits who identified redundancies or gaps in their delivery system that could be addressed through regional collaboration. Regional planners have expertise in a range of areas and are available to discuss specific projects or issues with local officials, affordable housing proponents, and the public.

Some of New Hampshire's regional planning commissions have employed outreach and education techniques to begin to foster regional collaboration on the issue of affordable housing. This is an important role, and these activities should continue as an approach to keeping the issues of housing availability, affordability, and diversity visible to New Hampshire's residents and leaders.