



FINAL REPORT



**WORKFORCE
HOUSING COALITION**
OF THE GREATER SEACOAST

The Stenton Mill Area Revitalization Workshop

A Workforce Housing Coalition Design Charrette

In partnership with
Sea Grant Maine
at the University of Maine

Hosted by the City of Sanford, Maine
September 26 and 28, 2017

Workforce Housing **Design Charrette**

Sanford, Maine

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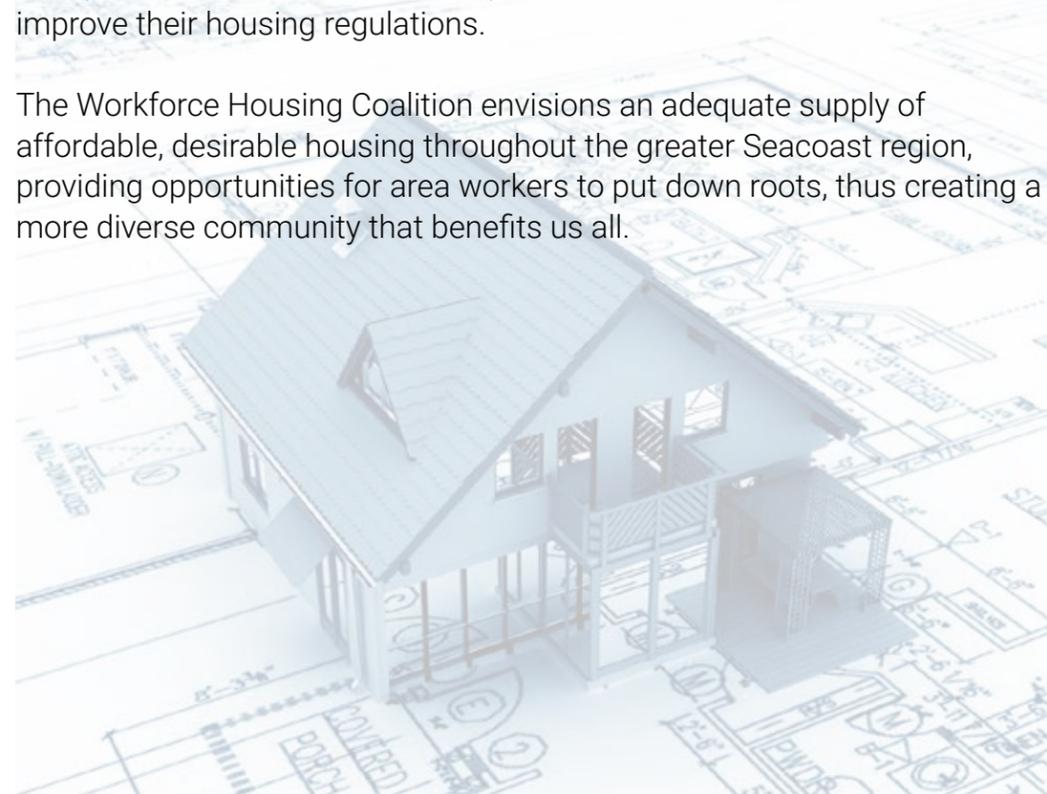
**WORKFORCE
HOUSING COALITION**
OF THE GREATER SEACOAST

Workforce Housing Coalition

The mission of the **Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast** is to ensure the development of a range of housing options for the diverse workforce in the communities it serves.

The coalition’s strategy is to be a catalyst through creating, sustaining, and nurturing a unity of business, government, and community groups. Through education, advocacy, and community engagement, the Workforce Housing Coalition communicates the importance of diversified, accessible, and quality housing. The Workforce Housing Coalition strives to bring parties together to ensure that the professional workforce is able to live in the community where they work. Since its inception in 2001, the Workforce Housing Coalition has continued to serve 54 communities in New Hampshire and Maine and has helped more than two dozen communities improve their housing regulations.

The Workforce Housing Coalition envisions an adequate supply of affordable, desirable housing throughout the greater Seacoast region, providing opportunities for area workers to put down roots, thus creating a more diverse community that benefits us all.



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Charrette Mission and Process

The Workforce Housing Coalition's signature design charrettes are dedicated to transforming the way people work together by broadening the host community's capacity for collaboration. Each charrette is a hypothetical thought exercise that harnesses the talents and energies of volunteer architects, engineers, and other housing industry professionals. The charrette process relies on the realistic challenges presented by a real site, but allows the community and the volunteers to ask "what if?" We ask community members to describe their ideal community, and our volunteers bring these ideas to life. The charrette process is intended to be a catalyst, helping host communities identify, and therefore change, local land-use regulations that aren't conducive to the development of financially feasible workforce housing. Volunteers are encouraged to push the host community's existing regulations and present a design that will inspire change.

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, and to identify and amend local land-use regulations in order to better facilitate the development of financially feasible workforce housing.

For three days, planners, architects, designers, developers, bankers, business leaders, property owners, and abutters join forces to cooperatively discuss creative plans for solutions around workforce housing.

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. Host a site walk
6. Listen to needs and concerns of community members
7. Create design options
8. Present designs and financial feasibility
9. Prepare a final report



Workforce Housing Overview

"Workforce housing" is a term used to describe a broad range of owner occupied and rental housing that is affordable to the individuals and families that represent the majority of a diverse workforce, and whose income is generally between 80 and 120 percent of the median area income. Housing that is "affordable" to the workforce refers to combined rental and utility costs or combined mortgage loans that do not exceed 30 percent of a household annual gross income. Workforce housing is permanent, quality housing, intended as primary year-round residence that is available to households regardless of age.

Options that are affordable to moderate- and low-income households include single- or multi-family homes, townhouses, condominiums, and apartments. Workforce housing is based on good design and minimal impact. The 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.

A healthy and vibrant community with strong ecosystems is filled with all generations of the workforce: young professionals to empty-nesters. The faces of the workforce are often healthcare workers, teachers, and skilled laborers. These workers provide the benefits and services we associate with a desirable place to live. Ensuring that there are housing options available to provide the opportunity for them to establish roots and become part of the community where they work will create healthy social, cultural, and economic systems.





Charrette **Leadership Team**

Chair and Facilitator

Kristen Grant
University of Maine Cooperative Extension

Hosts

Beth Della Valle
Director of Planning and Development, City of Sanford
Jim Nimon
Sanford Regional Economic Growth Council

Design Team Lead

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Housing Expert

Marty Chapman, *The Housing Partnership*

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Michael Castagna, *Castagna Consulting Group*

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Ralph Pope, *Coldwell Bankers*

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Samantha Foote, *Credere Associates*

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Sarah Garstka, *Workforce Housing Coalition*
Carrie DiGeorge, *Envoy Mortgage*
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Dianne Connolly, *Sanford Planning Board*
Heidi Jackson, *Sanford Housing Authority*
Heidi Walker, *Sanford Resident*
Ian Houseal, *City of Sanford, Community Development*
Jim Nimon, *Sanford Regional Economic Growth Council*
Mesha Quinn, *Sanford Unitarian Universalist Church*
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Rick Stanley, *Sanford Chamber of Commerce*
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Suzanne McKechnie, *Investcomm Commercial Group*

The Sanford Community

Sanford's population, which includes the village of Springvale, was 20,906 in the 2014 census, making it the seventh largest municipality in the state. As a "service center," Sanford provides jobs; retail sales; and health, education, social, and other institutional services to the surrounding region. Sanford's urban core runs alongside the Mousam River, and the surrounding rural areas feature many farms that support the local farmer's market, while lakes in wooded areas attract campers.

Sanford, Maine Fast Facts

- Population in 2014: 20,906
- Males: 9,783 (46.8%)
- Females: 11,123 (53.2%)
- Median resident age: 41.3 years
- Maine median age: 44.5 years
- Estimated median household income in 2016: \$44,859
- Mean prices in 2016:
 - All housing units: \$205,269
 - Detached houses: \$208,463
 - Townhouses or other attached units: \$138,749
 - Two-unit structures: \$145,157
 - Three- to four-unit structures: \$266,396
 - Mobile homes: \$88,296
- Median gross rent in 2016: \$764
- Population 25 years and over in Sanford:
 - High school or higher: 87.9%
 - Bachelor's degree or higher: 17.9%
 - Graduate or professional degree: 4.9%
 - Unemployed: 6.4%
- Mean travel time to work (commute): 27.6 minutes



"Sanford, Maine," City-Data (website), Advameg Incorporated, accessed December 27, 2017, <http://www.city-data.com/city/Sanford-Maine.html>

Housing

- Owner occupied housing: 56% (Downtown: 50%)
- Renter occupied housing: 33% (Downtown: 42%)

Jobs and Employment

- Less than 4% unemployment
- More than 1,000 businesses that together employ over 10,000 people

- Top five occupations:
 - Office and Administration
 - Sales
 - Executives and Managers
 - Health Care
 - Production
- Two-thirds white collar, one-third blue collar



Workforce Education

- Integrated high school and regional technical center offer various fields of study:
 - Business Management
 - Science and Technology
 - Human Services
 - Arts and Communications
- Expanded York County Community College features a Precision Machining Operations certificate program; other programs planned

Environment

- For over a century, industrial use of the Stenton Mill area's 45+ acres has generated asbestos, lead paint, dyes, PCBs, solvents, and fuels that remain in the adjacent neighborhoods' soils, surface and groundwater, sediment, and building materials.
- The Mousam River was affected by a large release of oil in 2007. The DEP and EPA responded with sand bags, investigations, and permanent containment. Petroleum, volatile organic compounds, and high levels of copper continue to permeate the area and affect the river, environment, and residents.
- The mill district and nearby neighborhoods have high density and concentration of sensitive populations and are disproportionately affected by exposure to contamination.
- Maine has 11.7% of adults and 9.1% of children with asthma, compared to the national rate of 8.9% and 8.1%, respectively.
- Sanford has 2.0% of children with elevated blood lead levels, compared to the state average of 1.3%.

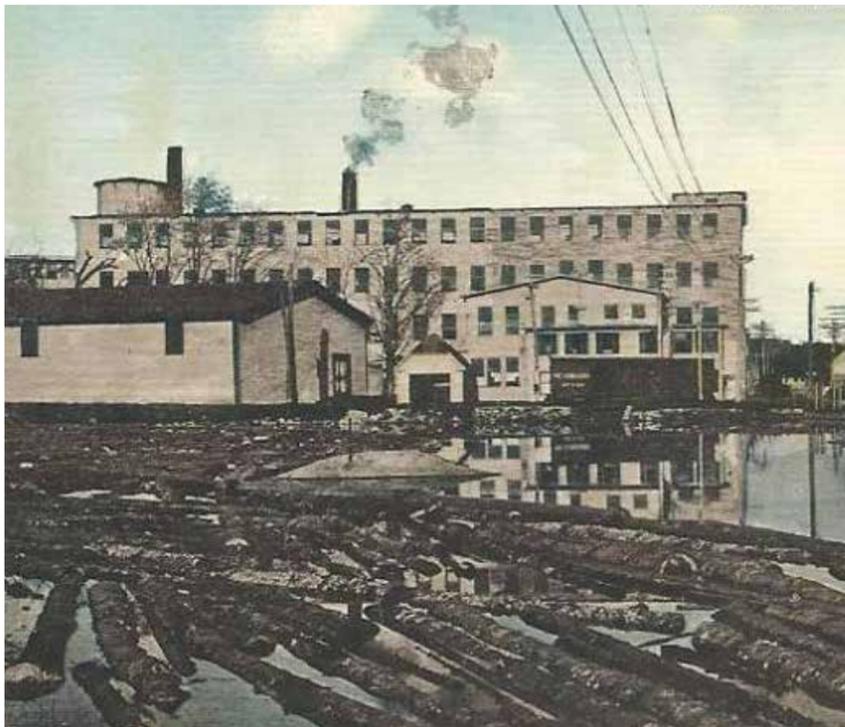
Transportation

- York County Community Action Corporation (YCCAC) provides year-round bus and van services with free/reduced fares for eligible individuals. In 2017, YCCAC observed an increase of 28% in local ridership.
- Sanford Transit provides bus service from Springvale to South Sanford.
- WAVE connects Sanford to Wells, Biddeford, and other communities. Since its inception in 1999, WAVE has provided over 690,640 trips for area workers to 72 different worksites.
- Sanford Transit and WAVE have improved employee attendance and timeliness, filled positions, and reduced turnover costs.
- Sanford maintains 25 miles of publicly owned trails.





The Stenton Mill



Goodall Worsted Company, Sanford, 1930s

The Stenton Mill Area Revitalization Workshop

The workshop provided an opportunity for local housing professionals to start a conversation between Sanford residents and community leaders about the city's housing needs and the potential of the historic Stenton Trust Mill site. Following the June fire at the Stenton Mill, conversations about the future of the mill area started in the community. After considering these conversations and listening to community input on housing needs and interests, the leadership team was able to create architectural designs for the possible redevelopment and revitalization of the site and present options that could serve the Sanford of today and propel it into a bright future.

The workshop included three distinct areas of the Sanford community: the mill district, downtown, and adjacent inner-city residential neighborhoods. As the fate of one area can influence the fate of the others, the revitalization of the Stenton Mill stands to positively influence the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

"(It is) hope(d) that the downtown landmark, that played a key role in Sanford's industrial past, can become a place to work and live in the 21st century ... The anticipation in Sanford has been experienced over the past 30 years in almost every Maine downtown that has a river running through it. The brick factories that began sprouting up along the water's edge during the 19th and early 20th centuries—first for textiles, then for shoes—were at the heart of their communities. As those industries faded away, business and community leaders have searched for ways to keep these work places vital.

The Stenton Trust Mill complex, first named for the Goodall Worsted Co., was built in 1922, when Sanford was a textile giant. Its workers produced the popular Palm Beach cloth, a lightweight fabric used in suits and sold worldwide.

It later became known as the Stenton Trust building, following the collapse of New England's textile industry. A succession of tenants have come and gone ... The building now stands abandoned, without heat, power or water."

Tux Turkel, "Sanford mill: Unpolished gem or albatross?", Maine Sunday Telegram, November 8, 2009.

Sanford actively engages in economic development by supporting local manufacturers, the extension of natural gas utilities, and the improvement of school facilities. In recent years, Sanford has supported both the construction of 38 miles of a high-speed fiber optic network as well as the state's largest solar farm. Businesses in Sanford are hiring and workforce housing affects a community's ability to retain and attract qualified workers for these jobs. Sanford has experienced economic development in terms of jobs; however, the rate of safe, good quality housing hasn't kept up.

Housing is considered affordable when households are dedicating less than 30% of their household income to housing costs, including their rent/mortgage, utilities, and taxes. There are 350 families in Sanford that have both parents working with a child at home, which means additional family services, such as childcare, are needed. There is also a growing elderly community in Sanford that requires additional services. All of these factors and others were considered during the workshop.

Recent Stenton Mill area studies:

1995 Downtown Market Study: This study described Sanford as a retail, social, entertainment, and service center for the surrounding eight communities. It indicated that Sanford had retail growth potential for convenience goods and a larger share of restaurant spending. The outlook for expanded retail for comparison goods has declined with the development of shopping areas in Biddeford and Rochester and changes in markets for national retail chains.

2005 Sanford Center/Mousam Waterfront Market Plan: This plan outlined the community vision to guide public investments and encourage private investments in the area. Recommendations included redevelopment of the Midtown Mall; improvements to downtown streetscapes; renovation of the mills and ideas for linking them to downtown, Number One Pond, and the Mousam River; open up views to the river; clean up the waterfall area; demolition of the "bad mill" (presumed to be the Stenton Trust Mill); and remediation of the land.

2011 Downtown Streetscapes and Midtown Block Master Plan: This plan laid out a program to improve the downtown streetscapes, including the "greening" of the area and other suggestions to create a walkable downtown; and improvements to the Midtown Mall.

2012 Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Pilot Program: The main conclusion of this study was the city must build upon existing assets in order to brand Sanford as a "center for sustainability, healthy lifestyle, and outdoor recreation."

The Site Walk

August 8 and September 26, 2017

The Workforce Housing Coalition invited Sanford residents, business people, and local housing professionals to join the leadership team on a tour of the areas involved in the workshop. The purpose of the site walk was to raise community awareness of the charrette process; explain the links between housing, employment, environment, and transportation in Sanford; address the current state of the Stenton Mill area; and discuss how revitalization could positively affect residents and businesses.

The site walk included:

1. Undeveloped parcel across from the Sanford City Hall
2. Gateway Park
3. Area between Sunoco and car wash
4. Stenton Mill
5. Adjacent inner-city neighborhood

Observations and Discussions

Housing:

- Level of safety in existing rental properties
- Affordability of riverfront side of mill for workforce housing

Business and jobs:

- Growing businesses need qualified workers
- Each workforce tier will seek a housing type to match its needs
- Many Sanford employees commute from other communities
- New projects underway will bring new jobs

Education:

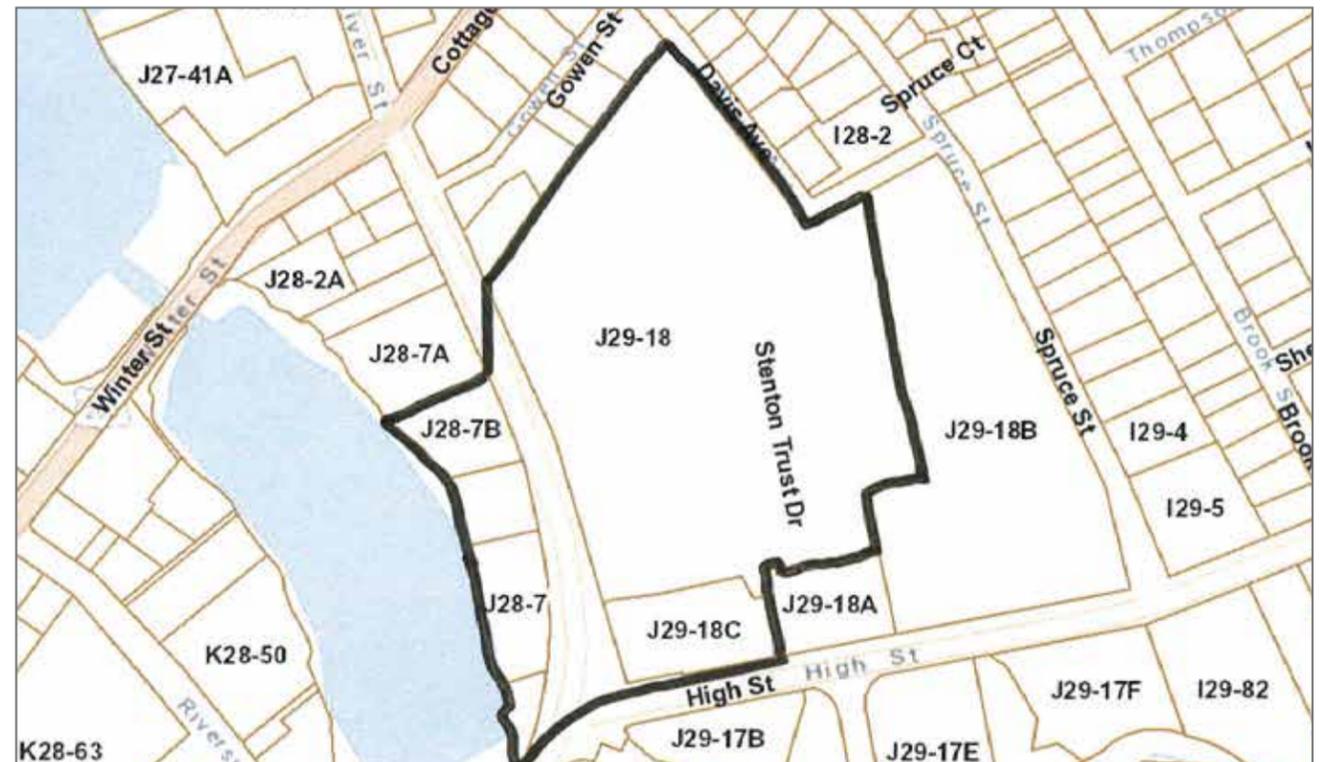
- Construction of the high school and improvements of other school facilities attract new families to Sanford.

Mill:

- Should all of the remaining buildings be demolished?
- New construction or renovations: form and function need to fit the area
- Possibility of mill obtaining a historic designation

Community:

- Development in the mill area will be encouraged by community support and receptivity to change.
- Development in the mill area will require associated social services for families and elderly.



OF NOTE

The Sanford Mill was redeveloped in 2015 with support from the Brownfields program* and received the EPA's 2015 Phoenix award acknowledging its success. Gateway Park was also completed under the Brownfields and Community Development Block Grant Program and involved the entire community in the planning and redevelopment.

*The Brownfields Program is an EPA grant program designed to clean up contaminated sites.

www.epa.gov/Brownfields

Community **Listening Session**

September 26, 2017

The listening session gave the design team an opportunity to listen to the ideas, hopes, issues, and concerns of community members. Thoughts offered during the listening session and in the subsequent online poll guided the work of the design team during the workshop. Participants were asked three questions: In considering the Stenton Mill area redevelopment, what would you like to see? What would you not like to see? Are there special issues, challenges, or opportunities?

Major Themes

- **Mixed use:** Support for mixed-use development that includes residential and retail space, as well as space for office, hotel, restaurant, cultural, and social services space
- **Parks and streetscape:** Support for the creation of public green spaces, greenways, and for the improvement of streetscapes
- **Design:** Community is divided over whether to the option to demolish all mill buildings or to restore the front tower and single story building between the two towers. If the front building is retained, community supports mixed use.
- **Residential:** Support for the creation of rental and ownership housing that is affordable and would help to revitalize the inner-city neighborhood
- **Environment:** Support for strategies that reduce negative environmental impact. Awareness of the challenges posed by environmental contamination at the site
- **Restaurants:** Support for restaurants that take advantage of the waterfront
- **Retail and hotels:** Support for retail and lodging
- **Neighborhoods and recreation:** Support for family-oriented atmosphere with facilities to host community and recreation options



To read **Community Listening Session comments**, go to: [www.seacoastwhc.org/publications/Sanford, Maine Charrette](http://www.seacoastwhc.org/publications/Sanford,_Maine_Charrette)

After the **Listening Session...**

September 26, 2017

96%

of attendees agree that it is important for housing in Sanford to be safe and affordable to a range of income levels.

88%

of attendees agree that there is a relationship between housing and employment issues in Sanford.

80%

of attendees agree that the results of this workshop could be used to guide potential development in the future.

89%

of attendees agree that the ideas and comments they shared during the community listening session were heard and valued.

Design **Concepts**

September 28, 2017

The objective of the design workshop was not to create a developmental proposal, but to generate architectural visions to consider, encourage discussion, and provide a platform to spark ideas.

Considerations for Both Designs

- Use of the basement for parking
- Street parking not conducive to pedestrians
- Uses for riverfront properties, such as restaurants and water access
- Target market for housing units
- Effect of topography on redevelopment
- Expansion of residential neighborhood to include the northeast portion of site
- Height of mill building floors
- Market study could help determine the feasibility of specific commercial businesses

The design team created two concepts: one centered around the demolition of all the mill buildings; the other involved just the demolition of the back tower.



After the **Community Reveal...**

September 28, 2017

100%

of attendees agree that it is important for housing in Sanford to be safe and affordable to a range of income levels.

78%

of attendees agree that the ideas and comments they shared during the community reveal were heard and valued.

92%

of attendees agree that the designs and recommendations shared during the community reveal reflected the major needs expressed by the community during the community listening session.

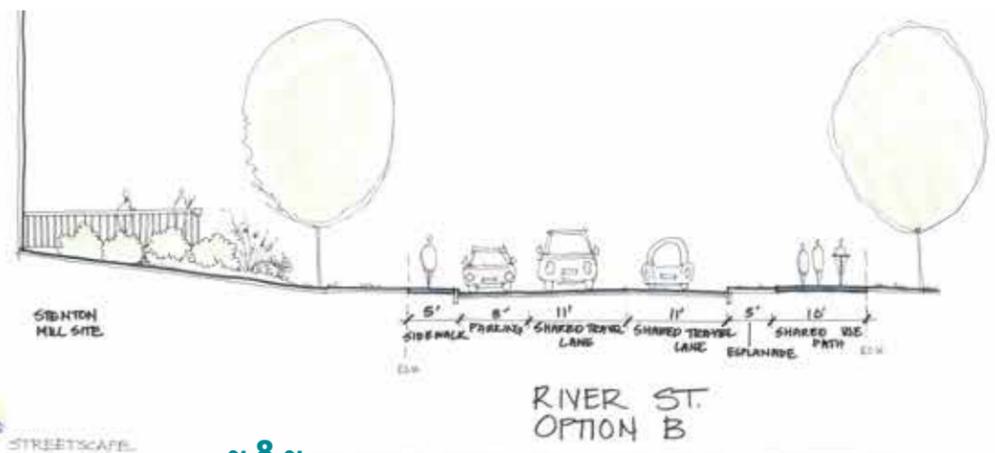
91%

of attendees agree that the results of the workshop could be used to guide development in the future.

Design Concepts — Option I

The Lofts at Stenton Mill (partial demolition)

- Top four floors of front tower used for residential units
Each unit would be 1,000 square feet
80 units total
- First floor of front tower developed as commercial space
Approximately 20,000 square feet
Restaurant/brew pub with patio space in northwest corner of front tower
- Sawtooth roof section of one story structure between the two towers redeveloped as live/work units
10 units total
May be able to use historic *Preservation Tax Incentives Program* historic tax credits on this portion
- Commercial space in the front of the tower and residential space in the back of each unit
- Basement of back tower would remain
- Underground parking reduces impervious surfaces
- Approximately 150 parking spaces total underground, including basement of sawtooth roof section of the one-story structure and the front tower
- Townhouses developed in northeast corner of site (near Davis Avenue)
Eight units
Extends existing residential neighborhoods
- Hotel or mixed-use building in southwest corner of site
Three stories total
Top two floors developed as 1,000 square foot residential units
Approximately 30 units total
- Additional road going through site to provide fire access
- Water views and pedestrian-friendly riverfront properties
- Trees, bike trail
- Park, restaurant



Design Concepts — Option II

Flexible Mixed Use

(total demolition with retention of one-story sawtooth roof structure)

- Sawtooth roof section preserved
- Potentially provides access to Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program
- Unique loft area that draws people in
- Parking underneath sawtooth roof and former back tower sections
- Potentially creates new neighborhood in former mill building portion
- Roadway around buildings and through center of site
- Two buildings replace front tower
 - Six stories
 - Commercial first floor, residential top five floors
- Two buildings east of sawtooth roof section
 - Three stories
 - Mixed-use or light industrial space
- Sawtooth roof section used as restaurant/commercial space
- Bus stop in southeast corner
- Northeast corner of site developed into three residential buildings
 - Each four or five stories
 - Each 24-30 units total
- Another six story building located in the southwest corner of site overlooking restaurant
- Light industrial building or brewery in northwest portion of site
- Waterfront properties developed into one one-story restaurant in order to not block views
- Sawtooth roof structure can be substituted with new development
- Updated market analysis could influence square footage of residential units and what type of commercial businesses are developed
- Development design can be easily divided into pieces so development doesn't need to happen all at once or by the same developer



Financial Feasibility

At the conclusion of the workshop, in addition to the architectural designs produced, a group of bankers, developers, and real estate agents performed a critical financial analysis to provide concrete recommendations. These recommendations contributed to the designs by ensuring that each design is financially feasible to support rental rates and purchase options that are affordable for the local workforce. The financial team also took city regulations, ordinances, and programs into consideration. A financial assessment was performed on each design.

Key Points for Both Designs

- Both are financially possible and a public/private partnership is key to their success. Using conventional financing for these types of projects is unlikely because of the need for revenue from commercial development to balance the cost of residential development.
- The Brownfields program is a likely funding source as part of a public/private partnership to clean up the site.
- Any potential developer needs to be experienced with large scale projects.
- The community may have preconceived ideas about housing that is referred to as "affordable" or "workforce;" however, the cost of development will remain the same.
- In Sanford, market assessment revealed that there is not a substantial difference between rates for subsidized housing and market rate housing.
- Industry won't flourish without people and there won't be people without industry.
- Two types of subsidy:
 - Funds that are provided directly to the renter in the form of monthly rent subsidy (Section 8)
 - Subsidies provided to the developer by the city that which are intended to reduce the cost of redevelopment, helping to ensure the affordability of new residential units.

Financial Recommendations

Option I: The Lofts at Stenton Mill

Total development cost: \$36 million
Conventional financing for 1/3 of cost
Historic Preservation Tax Incentives for 1/3 of cost
New market tax credits for 1/3 of cost
Necessary equity of developer: \$2 million

**Note: long term rather than short term profit*

**Note: Option I has 140,000 square feet of usable space; Option II has double that amount.*

Option II: Flexible Mixed Use

High total cost
Southwest corner cost: \$8 million
Subsidies must cover debt service because revenue does not
Necessary equity of developer: 20%

The Financial Feasibility team also looked into revitalization opportunities for some of the housing in the inner-city neighborhoods surrounding the mill. Some properties are well kept while others are in poor condition. In order to combat poor conditions, the city recently adopted a new ordinance requiring the licensing and inspections of rental units. The financial team determined that the creation of a low interest loan fund available to residents would be useful, as well as a neighborhood stabilization program.

Press Coverage

[As housing becomes scarce, Sanford eyes development around landmark mill](#)

[Walking tour aims to spark housing conversation](#)

[Workshops to explore workforce housing in Sanford](#)

To view all press coverage go to www.seacoastwhc.org/publications and search for Sanford Maine Charrette: September 2017



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The Workforce Housing Coalition of the Greater Seacoast is a 501c3 nonprofit organization.