

Moultonborough Housing Opportunity Planning (HOP) Project Overview

In late 2024, Moultonborough received funding through the InvestNH Municipal Planning & Zoning Grant Program. Administered by the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority, the grant supports a Housing Needs Assessment to examine local housing trends, needs, and challenges. This multi-year effort, running through Summer 2026, includes public engagement and technical analysis to help update the Town's Master Plan vision, land use, and housing goals. The project will conclude with recommended zoning changes aligned with those goals. To support this work, the Town has partnered with Lakes Region Planning Commission, Resilience Planning and Design, and RKG Associates.

Following is an executive summary and scope of Moultonborough's Housing Opportunity Planning Program.

Housing Challenge

For decades, Moultonborough's extensive frontage on Lake Winnepesaukee has been the backbone of a stable local economy, yet new trends and influences have produced new outcomes with challenges that have yet to be evaluated and addressed. Now, following COVID-19, a surge in housing demand elevated what had previously been a concerning trend in the decline of available workforce housing, into what was recently identified at a September 2024 Moultonborough Community Leaders Forum as the single biggest challenge the Moultonborough community currently faces. As demonstrated in this application, community leaders are aligned behind tackling this challenge, and we stand ready to act through the InvestNH Municipal Planning & Zoning Grant Program.

Moultonborough is best known as a small, picturesque community of around 5,000 full-time residents, where families and friends gather along the shores of Lake Winnepesaukee in the foothills of the White Mountains. Its winding, scenic roads lead to thousands of waterfront homes, many of which are occupied only during the summer. The local economy has long benefitted from the injection of economic stimulus delivered via I-93 North each summer. These properties and their visitors do not place a heavy demand on public services, and they don't have children enrolled in the Moultonborough School District. Our contractors, restaurants, resorts and realtors make up a huge percentage of our local economy. We would not have these jobs, nor would we have our very low tax rate absent these circumstances. However, as those who grew up in the region find themselves unable to afford to live and raise families in the area, the same businesses that have long benefitted from the Lakes Region's tourism economy are now finding they are losing their workforce. Young families, who would prefer to raise their children in the community in which they themselves grew up are finding it necessary to relocate during their earning years, with the hope of being able to afford to return upon their retirement.

Nobody in the Lakes Region talks about our current economy without immediately bringing up the fact that working people can't afford to find a place to live. The conversation has been

going on for at least ten years now, but the situation is only getting worse. Moultonborough took some initial steps, including Plan NH village charettes in 2012 and 2018, a UNH First Impressions downtown assessment in 2019, and the adoption of innovative land use controls in the form of two higher density village overlay districts in 2017 and 2019, but we are not seeing affordable units make their way to the real estate listings and the inventory of affordable rental units continues to dwindle. Today, the Moultonborough Community has come to consensus that we are now facing a housing crisis which requires immediate and deliberate action. Though small, Moultonborough ranks as the State's tenth largest tax base, and what we accomplish here will have an impact throughout the region.

Looking forward, old myths about the impacts of multifamily and other forms of workforce housing, as well as attitudes about the overall economic impacts of supporting—or failing to support—young families, must be re-examined and approached from a new paradigm.

Project Goals

The goal of this project is to come together as one community to answer the following questions:

- Why have we identified the provision of affordable housing as our primary challenge for the future?
- What commonly held values and aspirations are threatened or contravened by the current housing situation?
- Why have our efforts to date not been successful in stimulating the development of workforce housing?
- Why are people generally in favor of multifamily housing, but opposed to seeing it anywhere near them?
- How can we fill in “the missing middle” and create opportunities for housing options such as multifamily, ADUs, townhomes, duplexes, cluster developments, tiny homes, manufactured homes etc., in ways that build upon Moultonborough's unique character? Which housing types fit and where? What does attractive affordable housing look like to the people of Moultonborough?

Outcomes and Deliverables

Basic Scope

Teaming with Resilience Planning and Design, Lakes Region Planning Commission and RKG Associates, we intend to begin with the findings of the Lakes Region Planning Commission's 2023 Housing Needs Assessment, as well as other housing statistics and reports generated at the state and federal level. However, that data is not specific enough to Moultonborough and our unique demographics and housing needs. To effectively guide the future of housing in Moultonborough, it will be important to undertake three primary tasks as described below and as further detailed in the *Scope of Work* section of this application. Wherever this section utilizes InvestNH's own words to best describe our proposed actions, such text appears in italics.

Task 1: Master Plan Updates & Housing Needs Assessment

Moultonborough is unique in many ways given its location in the Lakes Region which has traditionally attracted a strong second home market. Housing costs, particularly driven by this second home market, have increased since the changes in migration patterns and market impacts that the region has experienced since the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the residents of Moultonborough to take any regulatory action related to housing choice and supply, they must first understand the Town's housing supply, demand, and any gaps that exist. A Moultonborough-specific needs assessment is necessary to provide this level of detailed analysis of the town's demographics, economic conditions, housing stock, ownership patterns, and affordability gaps. The information in the needs assessment will establish the analytical base that will guide the writing of the housing chapter, serve as a filter for the audit findings, be used to engage the public in this initiative, and ultimately inform which land use regulation changes or additions the community pursues.

Amidst a robust community engagement process, we propose to update the housing chapter of the master plan and *collect data and public opinion which will inform the revision of other chapters as they pertain to the development of infrastructure or amenities which support housing development.*

Building upon the outreach conducted in conjunction with collecting data, hearing anecdotes and identifying trends, we will build on what we have learned as a community and set a course forward by updating related aspects of the master plan implementation section.

Task 2: Regulatory Audit

The Moultonborough Community has already taken steps to address housing needs, which include the adoption of two overlay districts in 2017 and 2019, intended in large part to create opportunity for higher density workforce housing within Moultonborough's two village areas. However, as identified earlier, the housing situation has only worsened since that time. Further, developers who have attempted to utilize the provisions of these innovative land use controls have encountered considerable resistance from both the local land use boards, nearby residents and surrounding communities.

Additionally, conflicting provisions appearing in different sections of local regulatory documents creates uncertainty for developers, municipal staff and board members in regard to how to design, evaluate and adjudicate any housing proposal, thus adding risk to any project. Following the parameters of HOP Phase 3, we propose to *audit our land use regulations, as set forth below, and develop recommendations for changes to promote housing development.*

Audit Tasks:

Audit tasks will be based upon those recommended in the HOP application form, as follows:

- *Identify barriers to housing development that may exist in standards or processes;*
- *Identify outdated regulatory schemes;*
- *Specify changes to existing regulations;*
- *Identify opportunities for new regulations; and*
- *Cross-reference different regulations to ensure they are not in conflict.*

Task 3: Regulatory Revisions

Because the Town is already immersed in the work of revising its regulations to promote housing, this work will only serve to enhance the development of annual zoning amendments. Last year, the Planning Board was successful in obtaining adoption of five zoning amendments, four of which directly address housing needs by removing uncertainty related to density, development of nonconforming lots and ADU allowances.

While some of the regulatory revisions that stem from this process will likely be adopted years from now, this ongoing work will certainly accelerate as a result of the increased attention this program will place on our housing challenge, and it is therefore necessary to dedicate a portion of the grant to engaging our consultants in the regulatory revision process.

Metrics

Ultimately, the success of this and any other program aimed at addressing housing will be measured through demographic statistics. In other words, until young families are once again able to remain and prosper in the Lakes Region, our work must continue. Other metrics (e.g., how many flyers were handed out, how many people participated in the survey, how many people visited the booth at the fair) will also be tracked, as the process of engaging the community—and keeping the community engaged long after this grant cycle—is an essential outcome of this project.