

**InvestNH**  
**Housing Opportunity Planning (HOP)**  
**2022**

**Grant Application**  
**Town of Sullivan, New Hampshire**

**REVISED DECEMBER 2022**



**InvestNH Housing Opportunity Planning (HOP) Grant Application/Town of Sullivan, NH**

The Town of Sullivan is a rural community of 700 residents located in the hills outside of the City of Keene in Cheshire County. We propose to, in the context of community engagement, identify and remove barriers to housing so planning steps can be undertaken to revitalize the community and put it on a more sustainable path.

• Name of municipality and address of town hall

Sullivan, New Hampshire  
Address: Town of Sullivan  
452 Centre Street  
[Mailing address: P.O. Box 110]  
Sullivan, New Hampshire 03445

• Project contact person's name, affiliation with community, phone, email

Contact: Leslie Casey  
Planning Board, Chair  
(603) 847-3316  
Planning@TownofSullivanNH.com

• Date of most recent Master Plan and section(s) of the Master Plan that support this project

Date of Master Plan: December 3, 2014

Sections of the Master Plan that Support this Project:

- Vision Statement
- Housing and Population
- Economic Analysis
- Land Use in Sullivan
- Traffic and Transportation
- Implementation Plan

• Phase(s) of regulatory change applied for, and the amount of funding requested

<u>Phases</u>	<u>Funding Requested</u>
1. Needs Analysis and Planning	\$20,000
2. Regulatory Audits	\$25,000

• Unique Entity Identifier (UEI): LLVGH4A13CL5

Signature of Authorized Representative: Marsha Cook  
Print Name: Marsha Cook  
Title: Board of Selectmen, Chair

## **APPLICATION NARRATIVE**

### ***Housing Challenge and Project Goals***

The town of Sullivan is a rural community of 700 residents located in the hills outside of the city of Keene. The town's population has declined over the last 20 years primarily due to the loss of young adults and children. The town faces many challenges in ensuring that the housing needs of its current and future residents are met while embracing our small town's distinct sense of place.

#### Housing Challenges

Nearly 1 in 3 housing units in the Region is in excess of 75 years old and typically lacks the characteristics that are conducive to seniors aging in place (e.g. ground floor living, wide doorways, low maintenance and energy costs, etc.). Moreover, many houses are in a poor state of repair and would likely need considerable investment to upgrade them to the point where they are desirable to new residents.

Housing affordability plays a role in attracting younger adults. However, residential property taxes are high due to a variety of factors, including the very low tax rate for land in Current Use and over-reliance on local tax revenue to fund schools. Furthermore, total dependence on personal automobiles to access jobs, school, shopping, etc. adds a substantial financial burden to living in Sullivan, making it more difficult to afford housing.

#### Barriers to Housing Development

The town's dimensional requirements for buildings, which exceed State requirements, render many lots unbuildable that would otherwise be suitable for residential or commercial use. There are no public water and sewer utilities in town, generally precluding development of high-density and multifamily housing. Internal Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and house-sharing increase housing supply and reduce costs and are allowed under town regulations, but few homeowners pursue those opportunities.

There are few public roads for the amount of land, totaling only 29.6 miles. As a result, the development pattern since the 1970's has tended to strip road frontage from large parcels, leaving landlocked back lots. That pattern greatly limits the number of new houses that can be built.

The steep, rocky terrain and the prevalence of wetlands increase the cost of development projects. Review of proposals that involve steep slopes and/or regulated wetlands requires a degree of technical knowledge that is largely beyond the capabilities of most volunteer town officials, who then default to opposing projects or imposing delays and costly studies to gather more information. Residents consistently prioritize conservation over new development.

Lack of a fee schedule to cover town costs relating to processing applications and a municipal government made up mainly of volunteers can make development proposals an unwanted burden.

#### Project Goals

The primary goal of the project is to increase the supply of housing in Sullivan. The goal of Phase 1, Needs Analysis and Planning, is to access and analyze available data related to Sullivan's housing needs to support development of housing-related sections in the master plan. We will utilize the SWRPC RHNA for regional context, and identify gaps at the municipal level for Sullivan.

Housing-related findings and opportunities will be disseminated through public engagement. A Community Engagement Plan will be implemented to facilitate effective housing discussions. That outreach is expected to result in values and attitudes of Sullivan residents that demonstrate greater understanding of the need for more housing and related local amenities, so Sullivan can be well-positioned for the future. It may also lead to greater acceptance of ways to reduce housing costs such as rental ADUs and house-sharing. A key outcome will be a needs-based implementation plan for new housing development that will also reflect the desired character of the community.

The main goal of Phase 2, Regulatory Audit, is to more clearly identify regulatory barriers to housing development and identify ways to improve efficiency in Sullivan’s permitting processes. We will also present initial findings to community representatives and staff to identify priorities for drafting new local ordinances and regulations, and amendments to existing ones.

The town anticipates that it will submit an application for funding for Regulatory Development (regulatory change Phase 3) at a later date to support implementation of Phase 2 recommendations.

### ***Outcomes and Deliverables***

#### Phase I, Needs Analysis and Planning

##### Outcomes:

- Housing, income, and demographic data analyzed, including housing market costs, housing units needed to meet future expected growth in Sullivan and the region, and affordability of Sullivan’s housing for all income ranges;
- Community engagement conducted, resulting in greater understanding of the need for more housing and housing-related local amenities, and the need for more access to housing development expertise for town officials;
- Master plan sections related to or impacting housing development (including housing-related implementation plan chapter) drafted in the context of community engagement for the purpose of supporting increased housing supply and affordability.

##### Deliverables:

1. Documented understanding of Sullivan residents’ values and attitudes toward housing
2. Adopted revised housing-related sections of master plan

#### Phase 2, Regulatory Audit

##### Outcomes:

- Barriers to housing development in standards and processes identified;
- Outdated regulatory schemes identified;
- Different regulations cross-referenced to ensure that they are not in conflict;
- Changes to existing regulations and opportunities for new regulations specified;
- Ways to improve efficiency and clarity of Sullivan’s permitting processes identified.

Deliverables:

1. Prioritized plan to amend town standards for new housing
2. Recommendations for improvements to town permitting processes

Regulations to be audited or revised:

- Community Planning Ordinance, [https://townofsullivannh.com/vertical/Sites/%7B55112C42-38E1-4306-9104-21AA508BD373%7D/uploads/Sullivan\\_CPO\\_08March2022\\_Amendment\\_final.pdf](https://townofsullivannh.com/vertical/Sites/%7B55112C42-38E1-4306-9104-21AA508BD373%7D/uploads/Sullivan_CPO_08March2022_Amendment_final.pdf)
- Site Plan Review Regulations, [https://townofsullivannh.com/vertical/Sites/%7B55112C42-38E1-4306-9104-21AA508BD373%7D/uploads/ORD\\_-\\_Site\\_Plan\\_Review\\_Regs\\_amended\\_2MAR2022\\_checklist.pdf](https://townofsullivannh.com/vertical/Sites/%7B55112C42-38E1-4306-9104-21AA508BD373%7D/uploads/ORD_-_Site_Plan_Review_Regs_amended_2MAR2022_checklist.pdf)
- Subdivision Regulations, [https://townofsullivannh.com/vertical/Sites/%7B55112C42-38E1-4306-9104-21AA508BD373%7D/uploads/Subdivision\\_Regulations\\_2008.pdf](https://townofsullivannh.com/vertical/Sites/%7B55112C42-38E1-4306-9104-21AA508BD373%7D/uploads/Subdivision_Regulations_2008.pdf)
- Driveway Regulations, [https://townofsullivannh.com/vertical/Sites/%7B55112C42-38E1-4306-9104-21AA508BD373%7D/uploads/Sullivan\\_Driveway\\_Regulations\\_02FEB2022\(1\).pdf](https://townofsullivannh.com/vertical/Sites/%7B55112C42-38E1-4306-9104-21AA508BD373%7D/uploads/Sullivan_Driveway_Regulations_02FEB2022(1).pdf)

## ***Scope of Work and Budget***

### Scope of Work

#### **Task #1: Needs Analysis and Planning (Phase 1)**

Develop a working knowledge of the *Regional Housing Needs Assessment for Southwest New Hampshire* (RHNA) currently being prepared by SWRPC to better understand housing needs in a regional context, as well as identify gaps at the municipal level for Sullivan. The Consultant will undertake an analysis of local housing market trends, and coordinate with SWRPC staff and other local and regional resources to access and analyze available data. The Sullivan Master Plan was developed prior to the availability of 2020 census data; therefore, this task will also support the development of housing-related sections in the master plan, including an implementation plan.

Estimated Timeline: January 2023 – May 2023

#### **Task #2: Regulatory Audit (Phase 2)**

The Consultant will be tasked with initiating the process of conducting an audit of local land use regulations to more clearly identify regulatory barriers to housing development and restrictions. Regulations to be reviewed will include the Community Planning Ordinance (Zoning Ordinance), Subdivision Regulations, Site Plan Review Regulations, and Driveway Regulations. This task will include: a review of local land use regulations; presentation of initial findings to community representatives and staff to identify potential priorities; an examination of the Sullivan's permitting processes and identification of ways to improve efficiency and clarity for private landowners and developers.

Estimated Timeline: May 2023 – August 2023

#### **Task #3: Community Engagement**

Community engagement is a cornerstone of this proposal and will be ongoing from the time of award and throughout the project. To best ensure that the proposed planning and regulatory changes promote new housing development that reflects the desired character of the community, the Consultant will work with local staff, boards and volunteers to gather meaningful input while also educating residents where opposition to new housing may be grounded in stigma, misconceptions and NIMBY sentiments that challenge the ultimate aims of this project. Proposed community engagement sub-tasks are likely to include visualization exercises to show a variety of housing types and character. It is important to acknowledge that this project provides a unique opportunity to educate residents about the range of housing options that are available and may suit the community's desires.

Estimated Timeline: December 2022 – August 2023

#### **Task #4: Housing Academy Participation**

We will identify up to three individuals to participate in the Housing Academy developed by UNH Cooperative Extension and help bring these lessons and insights back to Sullivan. While Academy sessions will extend for approximately eight months beginning in Fall 2022 with site visits planned later in the program, we anticipate using the Academy as a valuable resource throughout the project period, building relationships and sharing best practices with other program participants.



## Budget

	<b>Task Name</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Task 1	Needs Analysis and Planning	Identify local needs and market analysis not covered in (but which complement the work of) the ongoing RHNA; update/develop housing-related sections of the master plan.	\$20,000
Task 2	Regulatory Audit	Identify preliminary regulatory barriers to housing development and the present restrictions to meet the goals; conduct a comprehensive audit of local land use regulations.	\$25,000
Task 3	Community Engagement	Document public engagement process and project outcomes through multimedia to help disseminate findings and opportunities to the public.	\$ 2,500
Task 4	Housing Academy	3 people at \$250 per attendee.	\$ 750
Task 5	Project Administration	7.5% of total project cost.	\$3,618
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$51,868</b>

### ***Community Engagement Plan***

Sullivan will work with Housing Academy, developed by UNH Extension, which will provide education and community engagement training. Housing Academy will help the town learn how to engage with the community, set priorities and plan for an increase in housing supply at the community level.

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Housing Academy will be a hybrid format with webinars, online materials, in-person gatherings, and place-based training. Community engagement techniques and tools will be taught so participants can develop and implement an engagement plan in Sullivan. There will be opportunities for Sullivan to share best practices and challenges and learn from other communities.

To ensure a robust community engagement effort, Sullivan will identify three people to participate in community engagement training and receive support through the Housing Academy. Housing Academy is intended to hone engagement and leadership skills and help towns develop a creative approach to community engagement. Sullivan's participants may include municipal staff, elected officials, representatives from land use boards, members of other local boards and committees, or other residents of the community.



An engagement plan will be developed as part of the Housing Academy training. The trained Sullivan Representatives will then create a task force comprised of other town officials and leaders to develop an implementation plan with a detailed community engagement strategy. Implementation of the plan will result in community engagement through public and online forums (guided by Housing Academy training), workshops and hearings. Documented public engagement and understanding of community values and attitudes toward housing are expected deliverables of this project.

### ***Consistency with Master Plan***

This application is largely consistent with the current local and regional master plans in terms of understanding of housing challenges. However, it proposes new approaches to understanding those challenges, and will likely yield some solutions not anticipated by the master plans.

Sullivan Master Plan: The Plan has a stated objective of encouraging a diversity of housing to meet the needs of its residents, while preserving rural character. About 51% of Sullivan’s terrain is limited for development due to steep slopes, shallow soils and wetlands. The town is described as being entirely dependent on private automobiles to access employment, schools, goods and services. The Plan notes that some of the town’s existing housing is substandard. The Plan acknowledges that residents have a high tax burden and that the amount of land in conservation impacts growth potential. The Plan recommends putting more land in conservation, in part to minimize the need to raise additional taxes to pay for greater numbers of children to go to school.

Regional Master Plan: “Monadnock Region Future” recommends the expansion of housing options to sustain community vitality in the face of slow population growth and an aging demographic. However, high property taxes and ordinance-imposed costs have negative impacts on affordability in the region. Land in Current Use yields little tax revenue, increasing the burden on homeowners as a source of revenue for the town budget. Wetlands regulations are not easily understood by town officials who are often volunteers, which can be a barrier to development. The Plan recommends promoting working landscapes, and Low Impact Development. There is a need for communities to have a shared understanding of priorities in making decisions. The plan notes that enforcement of regulations is under-resourced in the region.

### Relevant Plans:

- Regional Housing Needs Assessment for Southwest New Hampshire (expected 2022)
- Sullivan Master Plan, 2014
- Monadnock Region Future
- Southwest New Hampshire Housing Plan
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Southwest New Hampshire