



Portsmouth, NH City Council

Municipal Complex, Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers, Portsmouth, NH

Monday, March 16, 2026 at 6:00 pm

Register to participate via Zoom. A unique meeting ID and password are provided once you register. To register, click on the link below or copy and paste into your web browser:

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Jzb-RoAXQ5WAXCkmLqeiAA

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Agenda

- I. **Call to Order – Mayor McEachern**
- II. **Introduction – City Manager Conard**
- III. **Presentation on RSA 79E: Overview of Law and Options for Adoption – NH Housing Community Engagement and Education Manager Sarah Wrightsman**
- IV. **Examples of 79E in other communities – Planning & Sustainability Director Peter Britz**
- V. **Questions and Answers**
- VI. **Public Comment** (*participation may be in person or via Zoom*)
- VII. **Adjournment**

June H. Philbrook, CNHDMC
DEPUTY CITY CLERK



NEW HAMPSHIRE
HOUSING

MUNICIPAL GUIDE TO RSA 79-E

Portsmouth City Council

Sarah Wrightsman

Manager of Community Engagement and Education
New Hampshire Housing

March 2026



NEW HAMPSHIRE
HOUSING

RSA 79-E
COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION
TAX RELIEF INCENTIVE

OVERVIEW

- Originally used as a tool for historic preservation. Been around since 2006.
- Enabling legislation. Municipalities choose to adopt. Can be applied to **downtowns and village centers.**
- Temporary tax relief to property owners willing to reinvest in older properties to return them to productive use.
- **Traditional 79-E has created some exceptional projects!**



86 Main Street, Newmarket

HOW IT WORKS

- Tax relief for up to 15 years
 - ❑ Substantial rehabilitation, up to 5 years
 - ❑ New housing units, up to 2 years
 - ❑ New affordable housing units, up to 4 years
 - ❑ Property on the National or State Register of Historic Places, up to 4 years
- Covenant to ensure identified public benefit(s)
 - ❑ Economic vitality
 - ❑ Cultural or historic significance
 - ❑ Preservation of existing building stock
 - ❑ Development of municipal centers
 - ❑ Housing in urban or town centers



55 Main Street, Newmarket (The Millspace!)



NEW HAMPSHIRE
HOUSING

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS



RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY REVITALIZATION ZONES

- Homeowners who want to improve quality, condition, or use of an existing dwelling.
- Qualifying structure must be at least 40 years old. Includes residential structures with up to 4 units.
- Unlike traditional 79-E, RPR zones do not need to be in the downtown or village center.
- Tax relief period is the same as traditional 79-E. No property can be granted tax relief more than once in a 20-year period.
- Can include the creation of ADUs!



Not a 79-E project – just a pretty single-family to multifamily conversion in Exeter!

OFFICE CONVERSION ZONES

- The governing body designates an area for housing redevelopment; owners of office buildings can apply for tax relief to convert the property to housing.
- [HB 1103](#) would broaden “Office Conversion Zones” to “Residential Conversion Zones” to account for other commercial and industrial spaces.



Not a 79-E Project – Image from a unit at 1000 Elm Street in Manchester

HOUSING OPPORTUNITY ZONES

- Tax relief for up to 10 years (beginning upon issuance of CO).
- 1/3 of the units must be for households earning up to 80% AMI (or an alternative mix of incomes).
- Can be used to improve existing neighborhoods or for new construction.
- [HB 1103](#) would:
 - ❑ Remove affordability requirement and allow municipalities to set their own affordability requirements.
 - ❑ Clarify that HOZs can be used for new construction.
 - ❑ Establishes tax relief as 7 years for no workforce housing, 11 years for workforce housing



Not a 79-E project – just a pretty cottage court in Conway!



NEW HAMPSHIRE
HOUSING

CASE STUDIES



RSA 79-E IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

- Approximately 70 municipalities in NH have adopted a 79-E program in some form
- Only one community has adopted a Housing Opportunity Zone (Conway)
- Only three municipalities have adopted a Residential Revitalization Zone (Keene, Newport, Derry)
- Varying degrees of success



Orpheum Apartments – 104 Washington Street, Dover

LEBANON

- 4 South Park
- 0.58 acres
- Single-family dwelling to five units (pre-79-E)
- 7 years of tax relief to develop three additional units where the back “ell” stood before it was demolished
- 1,319 square foot addition
- Owner is currently paying taxes on an assessed value of \$675,800. Estimated value is \$1,340,100.
- Construction cost was \$247,000 (42% of assessed value)



4 S Park Street, Lebanon

DOVER

- Strafford County Courthouse
- Renovation and four-story addition
- 59 apartments (studios, one-, and two-bedroom)
- 12 rented at no more than 80% FMR (20% of units). Rent-restricted for 21 years.
- 7 years of relief. \$789,000 to \$7 million+
- Developer is forgoing \$2.5 million for 21 years (rent restricted units); Dover is forgoing only \$315,403 (tax revenue)



1 First Street and 10 Second Street, Dover

MANCHESTER

- Factory on Willow
- 90,000 square foot, four story mill
- Mixed use art community
 - ❑ 60 studio apartments
 - ❑ Event space, commercial space
 - ❑ Outdoor areas
 - ❑ 16 short term rentals
 - ❑ Distillery
 - ❑ Artist in Residence program (free housing and a stipend)
- 5 years of tax relief: \$2,995,400 to \$8,439,600



252 Willow Street, Manchester

ROCHESTER

- Two historic properties owned by the City: Scenic Theater and Sallinger Block
- Restored the historic façade, connected the buildings, upgraded the interiors
- 50 studio, one-, and two-bedroom apartments and two commercial spaces
- 7 years of tax relief
- \$222,300 to \$1,190,900
- Big boost to the downtown!



10-14 North Main Street

LIMITATIONS

- Requires staff capacity and oversight
- Some confusion about aspects (e.g., number of years of relief)
- Traditional 79-E is not specific about what affordable means
- Challenges with assessing financial need (“but for”)
- Adaptive reuse is often more expensive compared with building new
- Template documents needed: applications, recommended processes, guidance for assessing departments



Hoffman Building – 45-55 North Main Street, Rochester



NEW HAMPSHIRE
HOUSING

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