Built Form & Character-Defining Elements Study for the Village of Chester

September 2022

THE MUNICIPALITY OF CHESTER

Consultant team

FBM architecture interior design planning

novita interpares

CBCL









About the Consultant team

Fowler Bauld and Mitchell (FBM) is a Halifax-based architecture, planning and interior design firm that has been in continuous operation since 1917 with a broad range of projects locally and nationally.

Novita Interpares is a Lunenburg-based heritage planning and design consultancy that has carried out over 1,200 projects in villages, towns, and cities across Canada.

CBCL is a multidisciplinary engineering and environmental consulting firm based in Atlantic Canada, offering services in building science, coastlines, environmental, geotechnical, sustainability, and transportation sectors.







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Executive Summary



Executive Summary

Study Context and Approach

The Municipality of Chester worked with a multi-disciplinary consultant team to develop a Built Form and Character-Defining Elements Study for Chester Village (The "Study"). Municipal staff are currently working on a review of the Chester Village Secondary Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law. The Study is primarily intended to support this review. In recent years, a significant topic of debate and concern in Chester Village is a perceived loss of the traditional character. This concern is often raised when new development or changes to existing planning regulations are being discussed. The purpose of this Study is to come to a more objective understanding of village character and to propose regulatory or policy considerations towards respecting and sustaining positive aspects of this character.

This Study provides:

- An approach to character and guiding principles;
- An analysis of elements that contribute to the existing character of the Village;
- Stakeholder and Community engagement; and
- Policy Considerations.

The analysis and community engagement for this Study focuses on three areas:

- Site Design and Relation to Context
- Building Design
- Social and Community Needs

The *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places*, developed by Parks Canada and Provincial governments, serves as a Canadian set of best practices for planning for historic places. Standard #11 in this document reflects how planners should consider potential new development within a historic place. It reads: "*Conserve the heritage value and character-defining elements when creating any new additions to an historic place or any related new construction. Make the new work physically and visually compatible with, subordinate to and distinguishable from the historic place.*" Citing this standard, when considering new changes or development in Chester Village, it is important to understand the character-defining features that ought to be protected or highlighted.

It is not necessarily desirable for new development to mimic historical styles. That is to say, the new can be distinct from the old, recognizing contemporary ways of building can be appropriate so long as compatibility is addressed. What is important is to understand the nature of what makes something either compatible and incompatible. New development can respond to current and future needs, especially where that may relate to changing housing needs, amenities and destinations, accessibility, sustainability, construction practices, and affordability.

The Plan Review has the opportunity to guide positive change. The following **Guiding Principles** are provided to assist in assessing new developments or policy directions that relate to community character.

Appropriate and Complementary

- Contribute positively to the historical context of the village
- Have a scale that relates to the site, topography and neighbouring buildings

Sensitive to Landscape and Seascape

- Respect the landscape and location of buildings, tree cover, vegetation, rockwalls and fences
- Consider views to and from the ocean

Timeless and Authentic Design

- Consider principles of proportion, form, composition and texture
- Avoid pastiche and "faux" architectural design

Continuity and Change

- Respect historical context while also reflecting contemporary needs, including housing options, carbon footprint, durability, and accessibility

Frequently observed character elements

The following elements are commonly observed in the village.

Site Design and Relation to Context

1. Topography of rolling hills, with sloping sites common
2. Street grid in the central village, with views to the water along many streets. Streets in the Activity Core include sidewalks, while other streets are narrower with more trees
3. Building setbacks are often shallow in Activity Core, slightly deeper in rest of the Central Village, and deepest in Estate areas
4. Mature trees line the streets
5. White picket fences, hedges, stone walls defining edges of properties
6. Gardens, hedges and plantings
7. Pathways and walkways
8. Access to water's edge
9. There are prominently sited parks, churches and graveyards

Building Design

10. Predominantly residential scale – 1 ½ to 2 ½ storey
11. Significant stock (75 or more) of houses greater than 100 years old
12. Style: Strong New England influence, with Cape Cod roof and gables. Other identifiable styles are common, including more modern buildings
13. Roofs: Mostly peaked roofs, mostly steep, a few low sloped
14. Many distinctive chimneys
15. Dormers common, especially shed style
16. Small additions are common, creating aggregated massing
17. Wide verandas common
18. Closed in veranda (solarium) common
19. Outbuildings common
20. Minimal decoration on facades - plain and simple
21. Houses predominantly white and natural wood finish, though some are colourful
22. Cladding is predominantly horizontal wood siding or shingles, though other materials are used, including stone and stucco
23. Prominent use of 6 over 6 windows

Social and Community Aspects

24. There are a large number of seasonal summer residents, and the village is comparatively quiet in winter
25. The village is generally tidy and well-kept
26. There is a compact commercial area
27. There are a small number of accommodations options, as well as short term rental (airbnb, etc)













Land Use and Architectural Character Areas

The Character areas map indicates the focus areas of the Study. The following character areas are identified with reference to settlement and lot patterns, architectural qualities, and zoning.

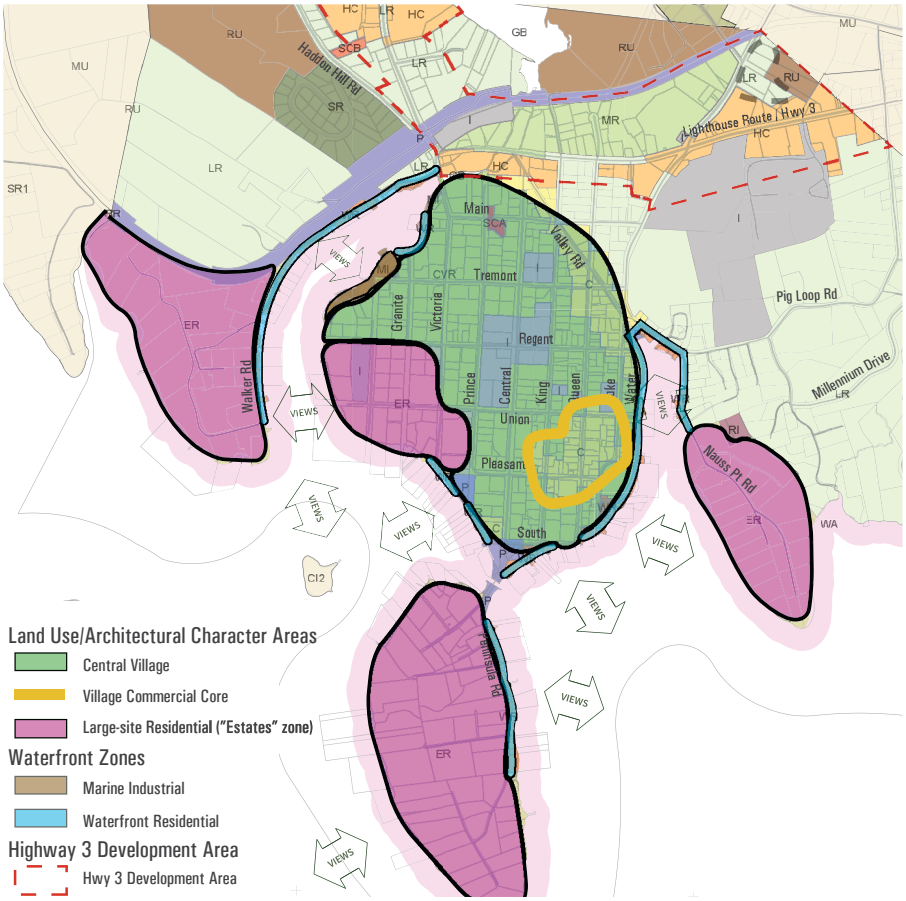
The **Central Village** contains a variety of residential, commercial and institutional uses, with a variety of lot sizes.

The **Village Commercial Core** contains the commercial heart of the village, as well as apartments, offices, cultural uses, and accommodations, with public access to water nearby along attractive streets.

The **Waterfront Residential Zone** contains a number of waterfront dwellings, docks and boathouses.

The **Marine Industrial Zone** is indicated, with uses limited to specific water-related industrial and commercial uses.

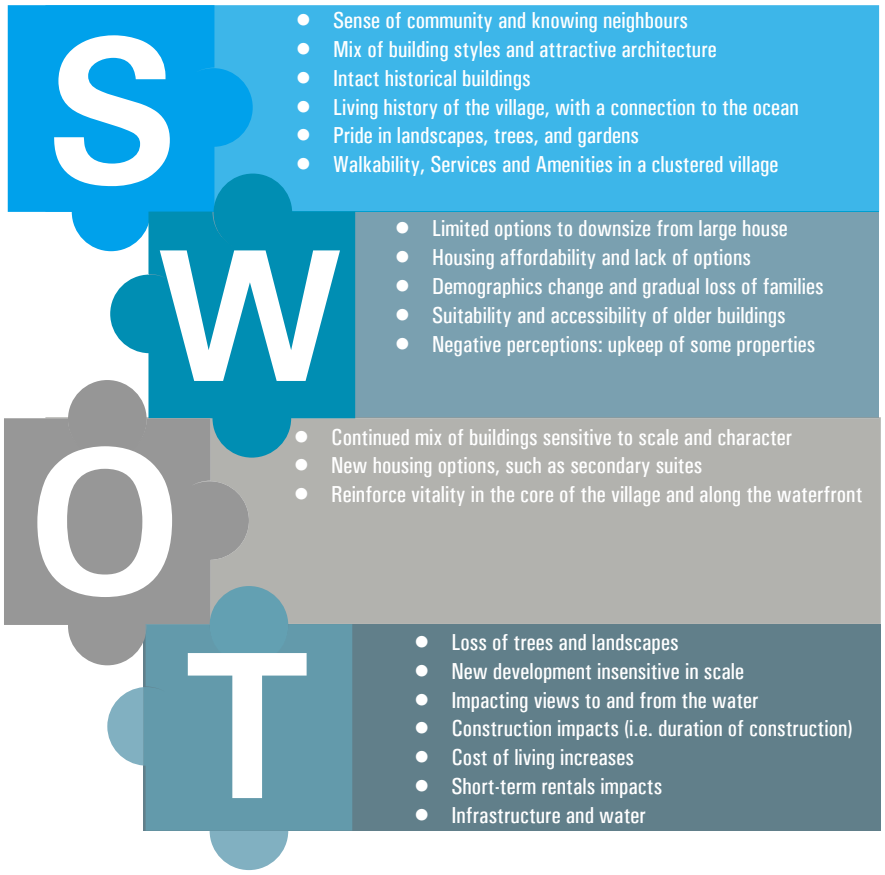
The **Large Sites Residential** area generally has larger lots , with larger houses with extensive landscaping. Houses often (but not always) have a view overlooking the water and are sometimes accessed by private road.



Community engagement

The goal at this stage of engagement was to share information and discuss objectives related to character in Chester village. Engagement was completed between May 5 and May 30, with over 50 interactions via survey, community meetings and stakeholder meetings.

Common themes that emerged through engagement on village character are noted as Strengths (S), Weaknesses (W), Opportunities (O) and Threats (T) for character in Chester.



Policy considerations

The following considerations, organized among 10 themes, are presented for the municipality in response to the Study findings. Many of these considerations are specifically focused on the land use bylaw as the most common tool used by the municipality to control new development, however, other tools for fostering positive aspects of character can be considered as well.

THEME 1: Building Height and Roof Shape

- Consider alternative methods for calculating height, such as using average grade as the base of the height, and/or considering allowable height with some relation to the grade at the street.
- Consider height precincts for variation in maximum heights in different areas of the village in a way that considers topography, context, and views. There is the potential that height may be defined slightly differently in different contexts, for example with water view sites or sites with very steep topography.
- Consider different methods for encouraging high sloped roofs, while still permitting low-sloped roofs.

THEME 2. Aggregated Massing

- Consider maintaining current requirement that buildings with a footprint greater than 1,500 sq ft achieve aggregated massing with varied roof lines.

THEME 3. Materials and Glazing

- Remove limit on vertically-oriented siding, considering instead whether lower-quality or less sustainable materials ought to be limited in some development scenarios.
- Consider a size limit for glazing per building face.
- Consider that the above restrictions might only be triggered on public-facing aspects of a building (i.e. from the street or from the water), and/or in larger developments, or development on sensitive sites.

THEME 4. Garages

- Limit attached garage width to maximum dimension.
- Require that attached garage be set back behind the principal front plane or pedestrian entrance of house.
- Limit width of driveways.

THEME 5. Landscaping and Trees

- Explore flexibility in building setbacks through variance to promote tree retention.
- Define soft landscaping requirements and tree species in new development, considering both aspects of character and climate resilience, while also promoting retention of existing trees.
- Advocate for street tree retention and planting with Department of Public Works on street rights of way.
- Explore potential for a tree protection bylaw.
- Complete a tree inventory to assess health of trees and canopy in the village.

THEME 6. Evolving Housing Needs

- Explore additional options for second suites on a lot or in a structure.
- Consider permitting additional options for low-rise apartments, townhouses, and smaller houses so as to promote options to age in place in Chester with a greater variety of housing options.
- Name change for the Estate Residential zone.
- Review lot size minimums in Estate Residential zone.
- Promote design for sustainability and accessibility.

THEME 7. Walkable Village Commercial Core and Enhancing Connection to the Water

- Explore requirements in the land use bylaw that are specific to the Village Commercial Core with the aim to promote a cluster of walkable destinations ("walkable streets overlay").
- The walkable streets overlay may include a requirement that new development provide uses at ground level such as restaurants, shops, tourism-related services, accommodations, personal services, retail stores, cultural establishments, etc. for a minimum of 50% of the street frontage.
- The walkable streets overlay may be accompanied by maximum setback requirements, parking, loading or other design requirements.
- Explore potential for Water Street to include sidewalk or boardwalk, along with the potential for Tancook Island ferry dock to be repurposed as a destination with events, boat tours, and vendors.

THEME 8. Waterfront Zones

- Review the Waterfront Residential zone's 20% max width of building and related regulations.
- In the Marine Industrial zone, consider how these lands can better serve as a connection to Chester's connection to the water, through additional uses not to include dwelling uses (Potential for a "Marine Commercial" zone to permit restaurants, and boat rentals, for example, in addition to existing Marine Industrial uses).
- Explore limits to fencing where they impact views to the water. This may include height or material requirements in the waterfront residential zone.

THEME 9. New Regulatory Options for Managing Scale and Impact of Development

- Scope a potential Heritage Conservation District for the Central Village as an option to preserve older structures and the scale of existing development. (Requires further analysis and community engagement)
- Recognizing a large number of pre-1920 houses, consider pursuing property-specific registration as municipal heritage properties. This might be incentivized by administrative or financial supports for heritage properties owners.
- Consider specific design regulations applying to properties that abut heritage properties.
- Explore a maximum footprint or maximum gross floor area per main building in all zones. The building size may be determined through a precincts map that considers each area of the village, or it may be considered relative to lot size, or relative to existing structures on a block.
- Consider development situations for which it is desirable to use development agreement mechanisms, rather than an as-of-right process.
- Consider three levels of project complexity, "low complexity," "medium complexity," and "high complexity." Low complexity processes encompasses small scale development (e.g. under 1,500 sq. ft footprint), renovations and additions. A medium complexity process could be triggered for example in cases where development is proposed at a larger footprint and/or at a location considered sensitive (such as a waterfront or adjacent to a registered heritage property). In medium complexity projects, burdens relating to materials or landscape quality may be increased recognizing the potentially larger impact of the project. High-complexity processes may be triggered in specific scenarios for commercial or multi-unit development that are seen as requiring a development agreement process, community engagement, and approval from council.

THEME 10: Additional Considerations

- Ground water supply as a consideration prior to approval of new development.
- Development of accommodations as well as a need to address nuisance and housing supply impacts from short-term rentals such as Airbnb.
- Negative community impacts as a result of lengthy construction projects.











1.0 Introduction and Approach



1.1 Study Context and Approach

The Municipality of Chester worked with a multi-disciplinary consultant team to develop a Built Form and Character-Defining Elements Study for Chester Village (The "Study"). The consultant team comprised FBM, Novita Interpares, and CBCL. The work was completed between January and July 2022.

Municipal staff are currently working on a review of the Chester Village Secondary Planning Strategy and Land Use By-law. The Study is primarily intended to support this review but findings may also pertain to the Heritage Properties Bylaw, and other municipal and community-based programs and initiatives.

In recent years, a significant topic of debate and concern, is a perceived loss of the traditional character of Chester Village. This concern is often raised when new development or changes to existing planning regulations are being discussed. The purpose of the Study is to come to a more objective understanding of village character and to propose regulatory or policy considerations towards respecting and sustaining positive aspects of this character.

For further details on the Plan Review and results of the survey, visit voicesandchoices.ca/villagereview. Alongside this Study, Staff are reviewing planning for the Highway 3 area, with community meetings in August 2022.

Plan Review Feedback (prior to the Study)

In Summer 2021, The Chester Village Plan Review survey (251 responses) asked questions about the "Chester look." The top 3 things respondents cited as contributing to the Chester look were "Waterfront," "Dwellings" and "Trees." Further notes about what was unique in Chester included:

- Tidiness, green space and gardens;
- The walking experience, sidewalks and pathways;
- Traditional architecture, including Cape Cod roofs, New England style houses;
- Low height of buildings;
- Connection to ocean, wharves, and the Lido pool; and
- Key amenities and destinations, including the Lordly House, Zoé Vallé Memorial Library, the Rope Loft, Churches, Yacht Club, and the Fo'c'sle Tavern.

The opinion expressed in the survey strongly supported the need to preserve the architectural heritage in Chester Village. At the same time, opinion was divided as how to achieve this. Some thought the municipality should seek stricter controls on architectural design, while others expressed concern that greater architectural controls may place an unnecessary burden on property owners.

Study Contents

This Study provides:

- An approach to character and guiding principles (See 1.0);
- An analysis of history, streetscape and architectural styles, materials and design elements that contribute to the existing character of the Village (See 2.0);
- Stakeholder and Community engagement in May 2022 reflected community objectives in considering character and change (See 3.0: "What We Heard"); and
- Policy Considerations for how future development can be compatible with the village character into the future (See 4.0).

Approach to Character

Chester Village is a historic place, with elements of both heritage and character. Nova Scotia Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage defines heritage as "*that which society inherits from previous generations and deems worthy of taking special measures to preserve for future generations."* (Heritage Properties Program, cch.novascotia.ca/exploring-our-past/heritage-property, accessed July 21, 2022)

Accordingly, the province's Heritage Properties Act allows for the identification, protection and rehabilitation of cultural heritage properties in the province. The Municipality of Chester has a municipal Heritage Bylaw in place, and there are over 20 municipally registered heritage properties in Chester Village (See map, **Figure 2.6**, next chapter). There are, in total, over 100 buildings that are older than 1920, however most of these are not registered as municipal heritage properties.

Character is related to heritage but also encompasses several other considerations. This includes more recent buildings, relations to streets, landscape elements, relation to the water and topography, as well as a sense of familiarity, comfort and social interaction. Character should be understood as an evolving story.

The American Planning Association's *Quick Notes: Measuring Community Character* provides the following guidance on approaching community character (emphasis added):

> *When urban design experts explain the concept of community character, they typically stress the importance of the **physical characteristics** of a neighborhood or town, such as the pattern and style of buildings, streets, or open spaces. In contrast, landscape architects emphasize the role of **natural features**, and sociologists highlight **interpersonal and institutional relationships**. But the average citizen understands community character on an intuitive level. That is, she knows it when she sees it.*
>
> *The danger of relying solely on intuition is that this can lead residents and business owners to oppose almost any proposed change to their community out of fear that it will negatively affect community character. Communities can approach change (which is inevitable) in a more constructive manner by working to identify the objective characteristics of the physical and social environment that are closely tied to perceptions of community character. This can refocus conversations on concrete measurable characteristics of the community, rather than emotional pleas based on intuition.*

Taking inspiration from these three categories for observing character, the analysis and community engagement for this Study focuses on three areas:

- Site Design and Relation to Context
- Building Design
- Social and Community Needs

Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places

The *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places*, developed by Parks Canada and Provincial governments, serves as a Canadian set of best practices for planning for historic places. Standard #11 in this document reflects how planners should consider potential new development within a historic place. It reads: "*Conserve the heritage value and character-defining elements when creating any new additions to an historic place or any related new construction. Make the new work physically and visually compatible with, subordinate to and distinguishable from the historic place.*" Citing this standard, when considering new changes or development in Chester Village, it is important to understand the character-defining features that ought to be protected or highlighted. This is a precursor to understanding compatibility. It is not necessarily desirable for new development to mimic historical styles - that is to say, the new can be distinct from the old, recognizing contemporary ways of building can be appropriate so long as compatibility is addressed. What is important is to understand the nature of what makes something either compatible and incompatible. New development can respond to current and future needs, especially where that may relate to changing housing needs, amenities and destinations, accessibility, sustainability, construction practices, and affordability.

1.2 Guiding Principles for Village Character and Compatibility

The Plan Review has the opportunity to guide positive change. The following principles are provided to assist in assessing new developments or policy directions that relate to community character.

Appropriate and Complementary

- Contribute positively to the historical context of the village
- Have a scale that relates to the site, topography and neighbouring buildings

Sensitive to Landscape and Seascape

- Respect the landscape and location of buildings, tree cover, vegetation, rockwalls and fences
- Consider views to and from the ocean

Timeless and Authentic Design

- Consider principles of proportion, form, composition and texture
- Avoid pastiche and "faux" architectural design

Continuity and Change

- Respect historical context while also reflecting contemporary needs, including housing options, carbon footprint, durability, and accessibility

2.0 Analysis of Character-Defining Features in Chester Village



2.1 Timeline of Chester's Settlement since 1760

The development of Chester has generally reflected the following eras:

1760 - 1776	The Planters: The Settlement of Shoreham (Chester)
1783 - 1812	Loyalist Era
1812	War of 1812
1815 - 1850	Peace and Opportunities
1850 - 1900	Sunshine and Shadow: Arrival of Americans
1914 - 1950	War era and depression
1946 onward	Decline of traditional rural life of fishing and farming

SOURCES:
Chester Municipality, A History 1759-2000; Chester, A Pictorial History of a Nova Scotia Village.
History of Chester 1759-1967 -Chester Branch of the Women's Institute of Nova Scotia.



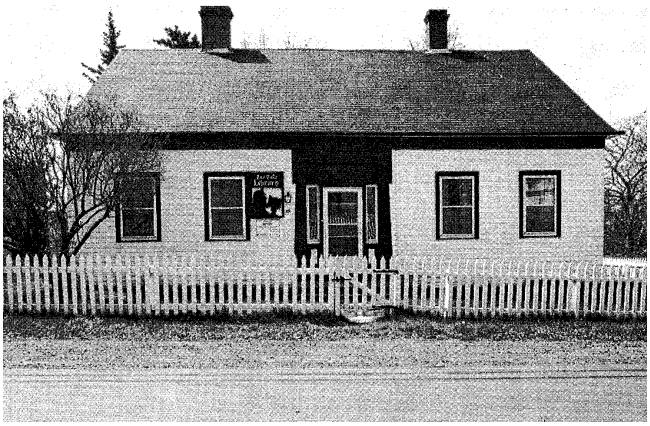
The original Town Plan - 1761

The Captain's House





Zoé Vallé Library





An aerial view of the Intersection of King and Pleasant, c. 1925, with the current village commission office at the upper left hand corner of the intersection. Summer homes dot the Peninsula in the background.



Source of historical photos: "Chester - A Pictorial History of a Nova Scotia Village," (Aerial photo credit to Mr. Harvey Nauss)

2.2 Chester's Look and Feel

Chester is a unique and picturesque village. This character is distinguished by its setting on rolling hills, its relationship to the water, the natural features and landscaping throughout, the New England Influence and continuity in materiality and colour of its buildings including a significant number of heritage and historical buildings. Due to the topography of Chester Village, many buildings have a view or direct connection to the ocean. Chester's strong boating culture has also contributed to the value of views of the peninsula from the water's edge.

With mature trees lining the streets, the village "feel" is reinforced. Boundaries are often defined by stone walls, hedges or white-picket fences, surrounding private gardens. It is clear that the green spaces of Chester Village are valued by the residents as they are generally tidy and well kept. Several homes use solaria and verandas to connect with the outdoor landscape.

As was noted in a response to the resident survey, ""It is apparent to the casual observer that the appearance of older structures within the core of the community constitutes significantly to its overall architectural attractiveness"

At the time of writing this report, there are over seventy-five buildings in Chester Village over 100 years in age. This constitutes a significant amount of heritage or 'legacy' buildings that contribute to the character of the Village. The majority of these buildings were built by settlers from New England bringing with them styles such as Cape Cod, Georgian, Georgian Cottage Style, Greek Revival and Gothic Revival. The "New England Style" often included somewhat steep roofs, dormers (especially shed dormers), six-over-six glazed windows, and minimal decoration of facades.

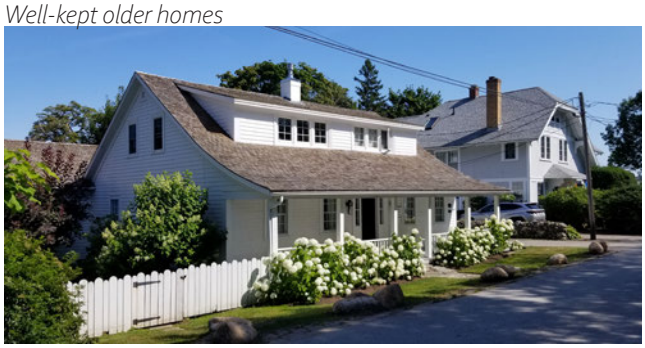
In keeping with the New England influence, buildings of Chester Village are predominantly wood (either shingles or clapboard siding) and painted with a natural wood or white finish. The village is of a predominantly single-unit residential, with structures predominantly from 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 storeys - with a small "downtown activity core", Chester possesses a village scale throughout. The cottage style architecture as well as the mature trees and well-kept gardens contribute to a pleasingly "quaint" feeling.

As shown in the timeline (see. **Figure 2.5** below), newer buildings have been constructed in recent decades, some characteristic elements have been included, such as gables and wood siding. Attached garages have become more commonplace. It also appears that new construction may tend to include a larger living space than has previously been the norm. A small number of duplexes have been the result of either new construction or conversion. While Chester has always been stylistically diverse, In recent years contemporary styles of architecture have been built in Chester.

Topography and variety



Well-kept older homes



Extensive landscaping



Natural materials



Views to the water



2.3 Streetscape Character

When moving through the Village of Chester, distinct Streetscape character types are observed, as shown in **Figure 2.1.**

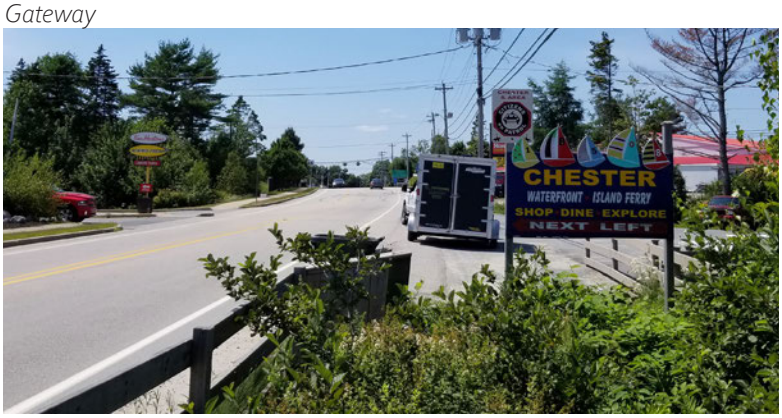
The streetscape along Highway 3, and when entering the village may be characterized as a "Gateway". Duke Street, Valley Road, and Victoria Street function as the main access points into the Village from Highway 3, hence their function as a gateway. The Highway 3 area offers services and commercial uses. Duke Street may be considered the Front Door, with more formal pedestrian facilities and access to major institutional uses. Valley Road serves as a vehicle access to the Tancook Ferry parking lot, the Town's Public Works Yard, and the Municipal Office. Victoria Street, on the other hand, offers a quieter and more residential street accessing residential areas.

The "Village Commercial Core" is observed as another streetscape character, defined by its multi-modal focus towards the commercial heart of the Village. The roads feature sidewalks and designated on-street and off-street parking areas, including accessible spaces. Sidewalks invite visitors to patronize the businesses, cafes and restaurants, and during the summer months, they become extended seating areas. There is a time limit on parking, encouraging turnover and movement. The overall impression is one of movement as locals and residents come and go, with the post office and the bank acting as major activity generators. Apart from Duke Street, this is the only area with consistent sidewalk coverage. (See **Figure 2.2** for the location of sidewalks).

The "Waterfront" represents the key attraction of Chester, with its wharfs, Lido Pool, and the Yacht Club. Water Street, South Street, and to some extent Victoria Street, represent the focal point during Race Week, with visitors and boat crews moving back and forth. Sidewalk coverage is sporadic, and circulation by foot or by motor vehicle alike requires awareness and negotiation between road users. This is especially the case on streets like Water Street, which see both a high volume of walking and vehicle traffic in the summer.

The three main streetscape characters are joined by "Connecting Tissue" in terms of Queen Street, King Street and Central Street, which serve as transition spaces between the streetscape character areas. Older homes varying in architectural expression offer a tranquil setting to stroll.

Gateway



Connecting Tissue (Valley Rd)



Connecting Tissue (Queen Street approach to the commercial core)



Water Street



The Residential Fabric is throughout the village has a consistency in its straight grid block layout. The rolling topography and heavier vegetation introduce variation in terms of vistas and the sense of the street. Without sidewalks, and with a generally narrower roadway, there is a need for pedestrians and motorists to share space, and there is also a strong connection between the street and landscaping of adjacent residential properties. This fabric contains both large houses and buildings, as well as smaller homes. Residences vary in their setbacks, lot coverage and scale, but the streets are the same.

Commercial Core



Commercial Core



Typical Residential fabric



Tree-lined street (Prince Street)



Figure 2.1 (Source: CBCL)

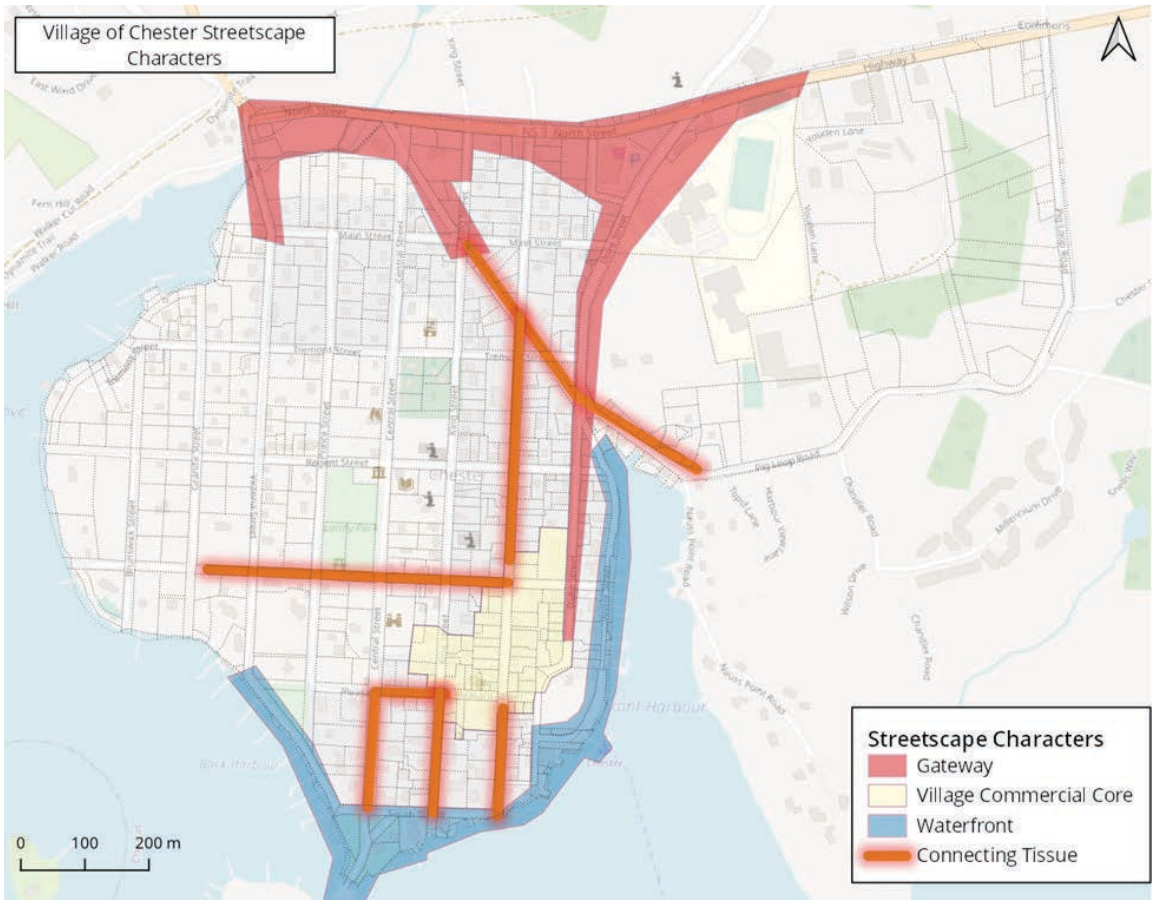
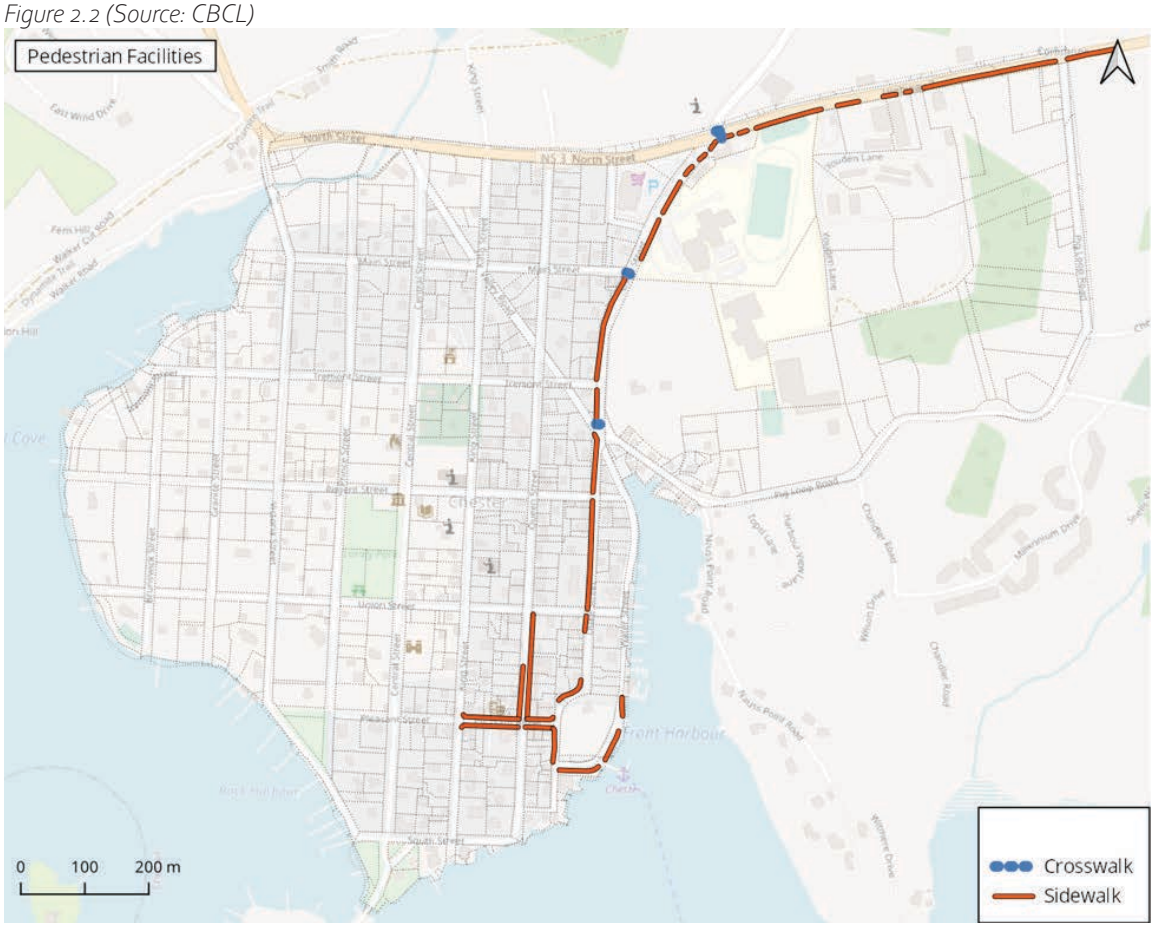


Figure 2.2 (Source: CBCL)



2.4 Land Use and Architectural Character Areas

Character areas identified in **Figure 2.3** were identified with reference to settlement and lot patterns, architectural qualities, and zoning. These areas indicate the focus of the Study.

The **Central Village** contains a variety of residential, commercial and institutional zones. It is the oldest part of the village, based on the traditional street grid of the original town plan. There are a variety of lot sizes, and houses are configured on the lots in a variety of ways.

The **Village Commercial Core** contains the commercial heart of the village, as well as apartments, offices, cultural uses, and accommodations. It is comparably more common to find buildings fronting tight together and tight along the street or sidewalk. This is a well-touristed and busy area of the village. Parks, library, institutional uses, churches, museums, docks, and public access to water are all nearby along attractive streets.

The **Waterfront Residential Zone** is indicated, containing a number of dwellings, docks and boathouses. The **Marine Industrial Zone** is indicated, with uses limited to specific water-related industrial and commercial uses.

The **Large Sites Residential** area corresponds with the Municipality's Estate Residential zoning. This area generally has larger lots (usually over 1 acre in size). There tends to be larger houses with extensive landscaping. Houses often (but not always) have a view overlooking the water and are sometimes accessed by private road. Because of this, many houses in this area are predominantly experienced from the water or across harbours, rather than with reference to the road.

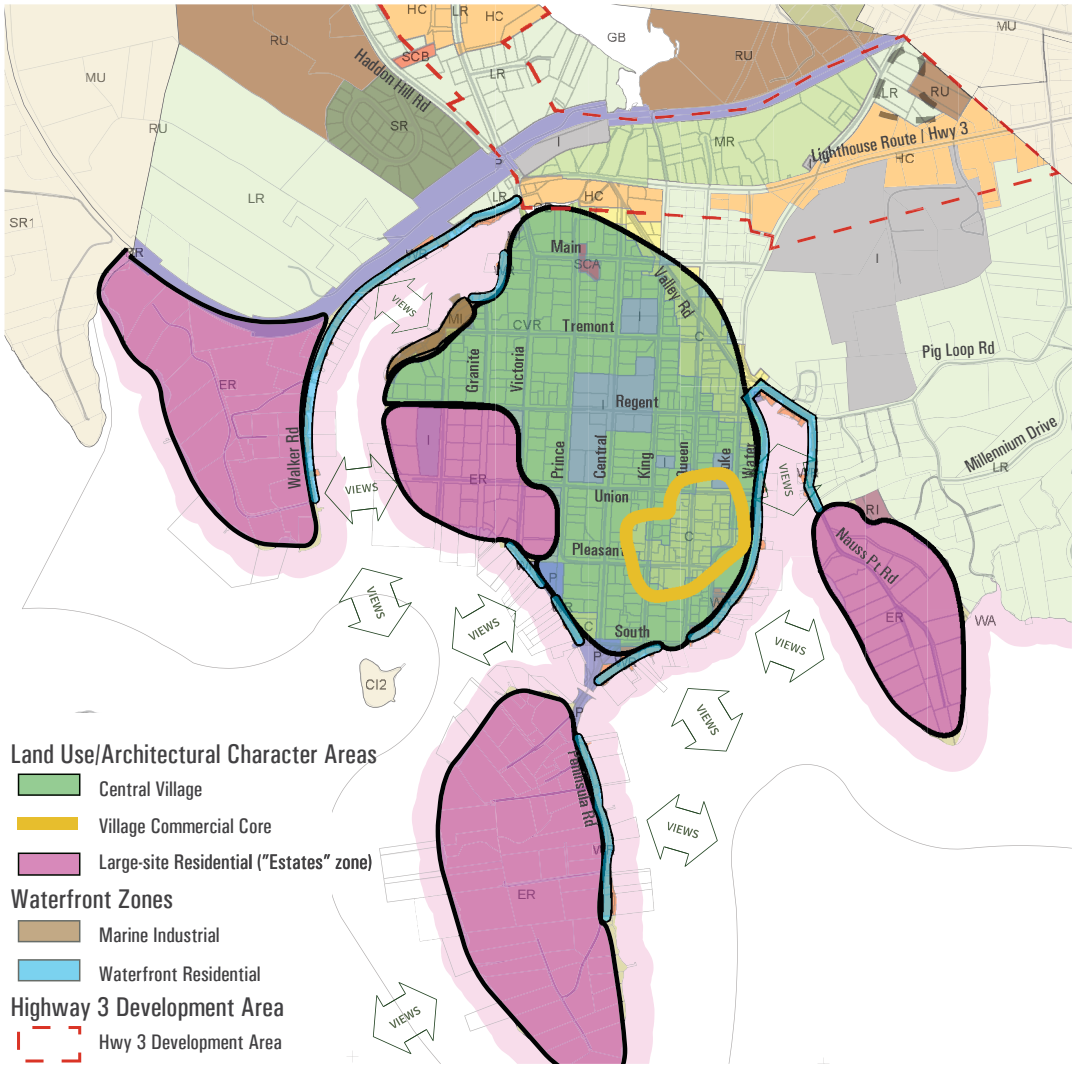


Figure 2.3: Land Use and Architectural character areas

Figure 2.4:

Selected buildings and style examples - Legacy Buildings



Quarter Deck, 1770, ***Cape Cod***



Samuel Prescott House, 1811, ***Gothic Revival***



Zoé Vallé Library, 1850, ***Cape Cod***



T'other House, 1776, ***Cape Code House Kit From New England***



86 Main St, 1830, ***Greek Revival***



Lavers House, 1860s, ***New England Colonial***

1770s — 1800s — 1900

Timeline continues next page



Taffrail Cottage, 1780, ***Georgian Cottage Style***



The Sail Loft, 1840, ***Vernacular***



Robinson House, 1902, ***Late Victorian***



Lordly House, 1806, ***Georgian***



David Nauss House, 1846, ***Vernacular***



106 Queen Street, 1902, ***Hatch Roof House***

Figure 2.5:

Contemporary Houses Timeline

Images from Google Streetview and Real Estate Listings, square footage from Property Assessment Records.

Houses in the Central Village:



39 Union St
Built 1899
2,402 sq ft living space



134 Queen St
Built 1914
1,648 sq ft living space



124 King
Built 1930
1,704 sq ft living space



75 Granite St
Built 1950
1,724 sq ft living space



65 King St
Built 1908
1,154 sq ft living space



82 Queen St
Built 1930
2,162 sq ft living space



144 Prince St
Built 1932
1,248 sq ft living space



156 King St
Built 1950
872 sq ft living space

1900s — 1930s — 1950s

Timeline continues next page

Houses in the Large Sites Residential Areas:



15 Fredas Point Drive
Built 1903
1.23 acre lot
3,944 sq ft living area



80 Peninsula Road
0.75 acres
Built 1914
3,071 sq ft living area



120 Walker Road
1 acre
Built 1931
2,579 sq ft living area



69 Nauss Point Road
0.75 acres
Built 1946
3,002 sq ft living area



56 Peninsula Road
1.83 acres
Built 1903
2,912 sq ft living area



102 Peninsula Road
1.41 acres
Built 1920
2,974 sq ft living area



106 Nauss Point Road
1 acre
Built 1934
2,894 sq ft living area



180 Walker Road
3.63 acres
Built 1958
3,672 sq ft living area



197 Central St
Built 1954
1,522 sq ft living space



221 Central St
Built 1991
1,272 sq ft living space



19 Main St
Built 2003
2,156 sq ft living space



128 Victoria St (Duplex)
Built 2009
3,435 sq ft living space



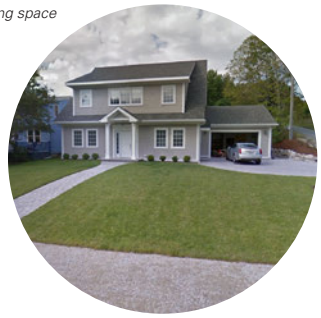
153 Prince St
Built 1966
1,910 sq ft living space



45 Union St
Built 1992
2,293 sq ft living space



40 Main St
Built 2006
1,992 sq ft living space



93 Prince St
Built 2013
2,592 sq ft living space

1960s **1980s** **2000s** **2020s**



50 and 52 Pews Drive
2.89 acres
Built 1959
4,490 sq ft living area



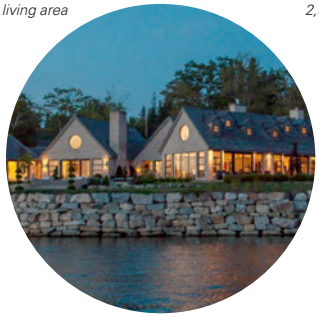
162 Walker Road
0.75 acres
Built 1980
2,986 sq ft living area



22 Fredas Point Drive
3.05 acres
Built 1987
9,057 sq ft living area



19 Fredas Point Drive
1.24 acres
Built 2017
3,792 sq ft living area



211 Walker Road
6.99 acre lot
Built 1965
6,071 sq ft living area



89 Nauss Point Road
0.8 acres
Built 1981
3,434 sq ft living area



206 Walker Road
1.42 acres
Built 1995
2,850 sq ft living area



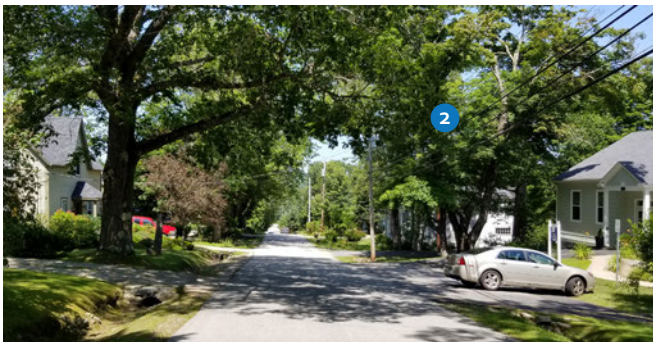
153 Union Street (Jib House)
5.56 acres
Under construction 2022
8,220 sq ft living space

Chester Village Frequently Observed Character Elements

Site Design and Relation to Context

1. Topography of rolling hills, with sloping sites common
2. Street grid in the central village, with views to the water along many streets. Streets in the Activity Core include sidewalks, while other streets are narrower with more trees
3. Building setbacks are often shallow in Activity Core, slightly deeper in rest of the Central Village, and deepest in Estate areas
4. Mature trees line the streets
5. White picket fences, hedges, stone walls defining edges of properties
6. Gardens, hedges and plantings
7. Pathways and walkways
8. Access to water's edge
9. There are prominently sited parks, churches and graveyards









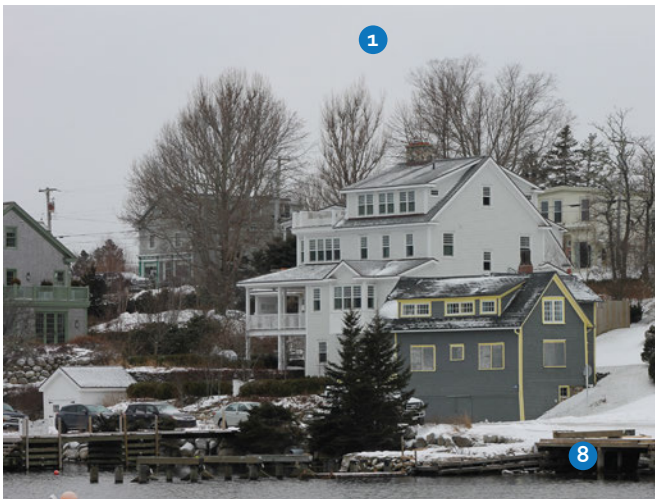




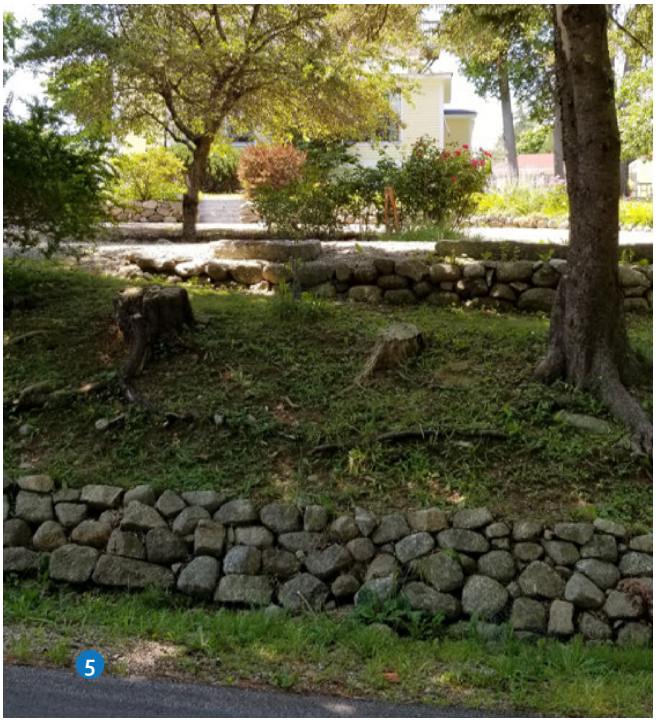



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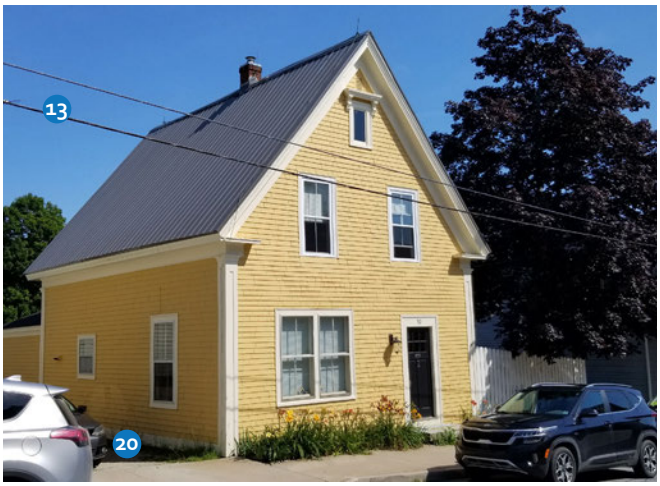

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Building Design

10. Predominantly residential scale – 1 ½ to 2 ½ storey
11. Significant stock (75 or more) of houses greater than 100 years old
12. Style: Strong New England influence, with Cape Cod roof and gables. Other identifiable styles are common, including more modern buildings
13. Roofs: Mostly peaked roofs, mostly steep, a few low sloped
14. Many distinctive chimneys
15. Dormers common, especially shed style
16. Small additions are common, creating aggregated massing
17. Wide verandas common
18. Closed in veranda (solarium) common
19. Outbuildings common
20. Minimal decoration on facades - plain and simple
21. Houses predominantly white and natural wood finish, though some are colourful
22. Cladding is predominantly horizontal wood siding or shingles, though other materials are used, including stone and stucco
23. Prominent use of 6 over 6 windows















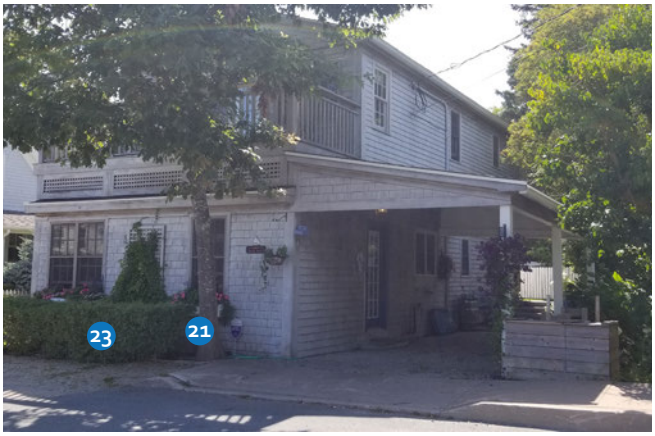

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Social and Community Aspects

24. There are a large number of seasonal summer residents, and the village is comparatively quiet in winter
25. The village is generally tidy and well-kept
26. There is a compact commercial area
27. There are a small number of accommodations options, as well as short term rental (airbnb, etc)















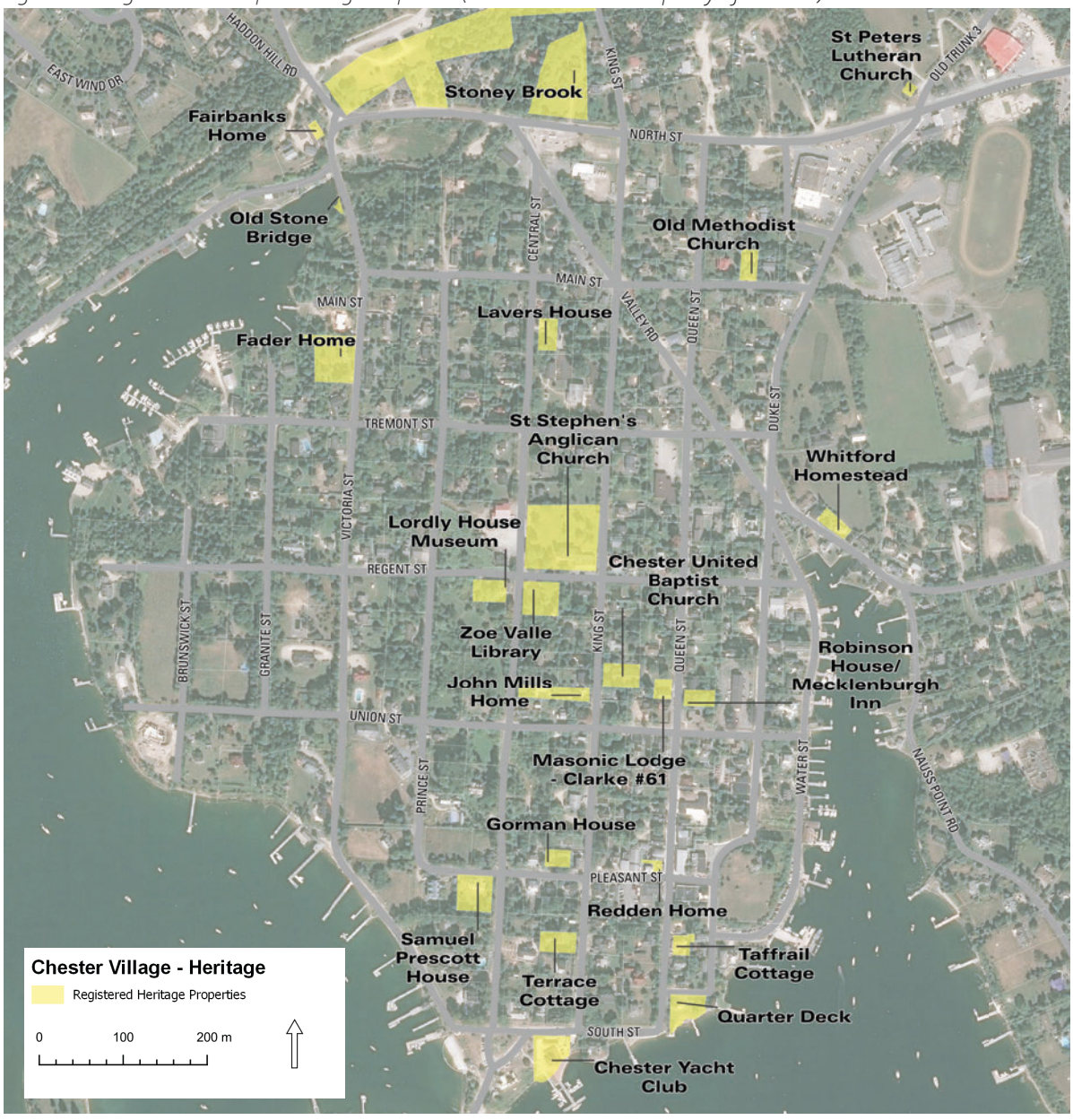


Mapping analysis

A mapping analysis is provided to support the observed character areas. **Figure 2.6** illustrates the location of municipally registered heritage properties. **Figure 2.7** provides a "heat map" of lot sizes whereby smaller properties are darker. Smaller lots can generally be expected to have a greater concentration of premises close to one another, compared to areas of the village with larger lots. **Figure 2.8** maps percentage of site coverage, indicating which lots have a greater amount of the lot covered, either with main structures or accessory structures. **Figure 2.9** indicates the scale of buildings, when considering building footprint, with darker outlines indicating buildings that have a larger footprint.

There tends to be a concentration of heritage buildings, small lots, and a higher density of site coverage in the Central Village, focused on the Commercial Core. There are many buildings with a footprint greater than 139 sq m (or 1,500 sq ft), especially when looking at institutional structures, buildings in the Commercial Core, and houses in Large Sites Residential areas.

Figure 2.6: Registered Municipal Heritage Properties (Data Source: Municipality of Chester)



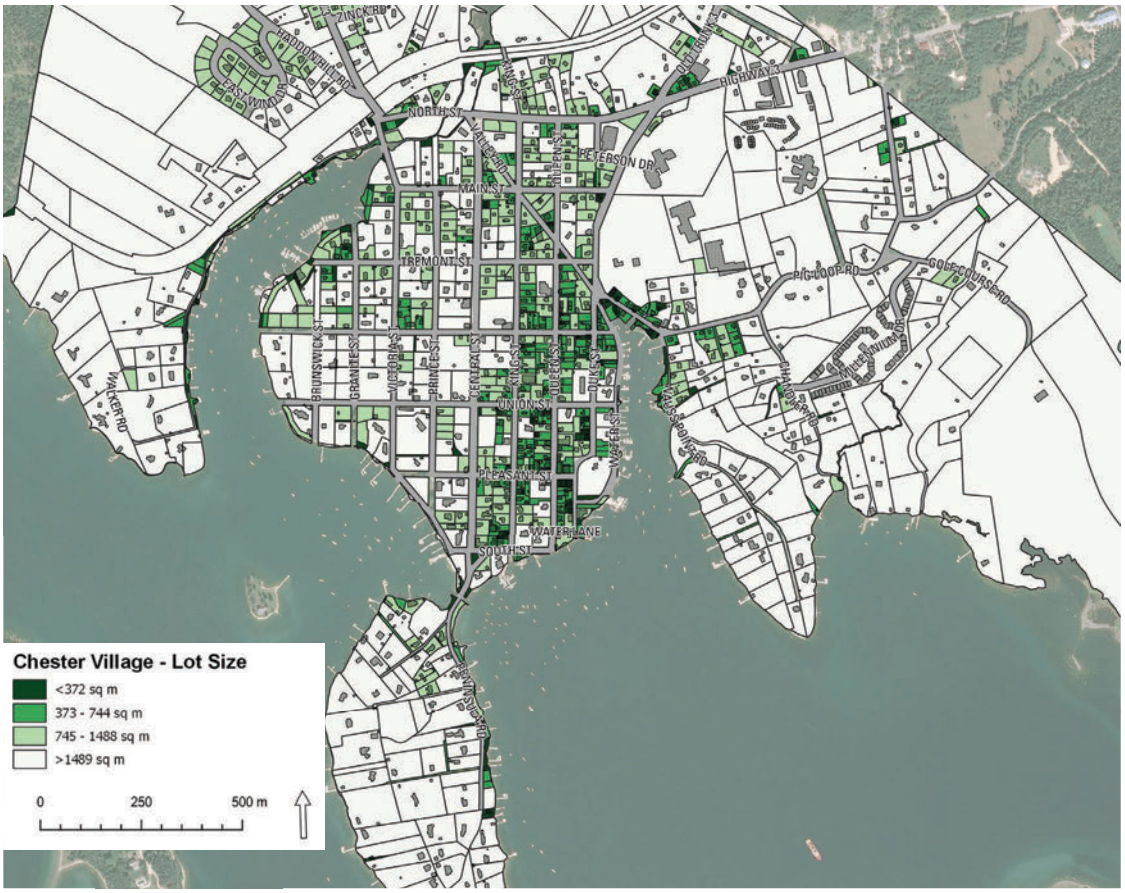


Figure 2.7: Variation of lot sizes

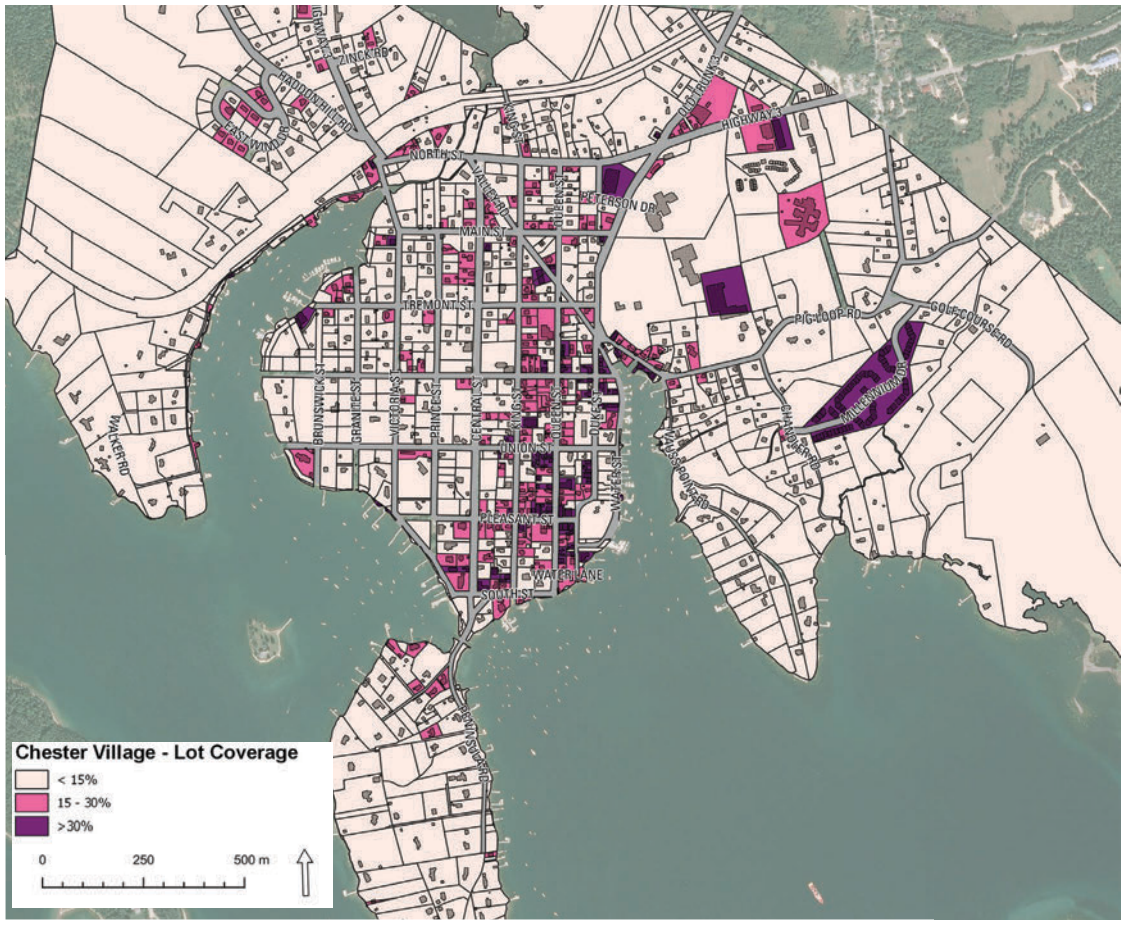


Figure 2.8: Mapping analysis - Building coverage percentage on lots

Data Source for building footprints: Municipality of Chester

Figure 2.9: Mapping analysis - Building Scale



Current Zoning and Architectural Controls in the Chester Village

The existing Chester Village Land Use Bylaw contains a number of architectural controls.

Height, setback, and coverage requirements are noted on **Table 2.1**. See **Figure 2.10** for the village's zoning map.

The following general requirements are also noted as relevant for the Study:

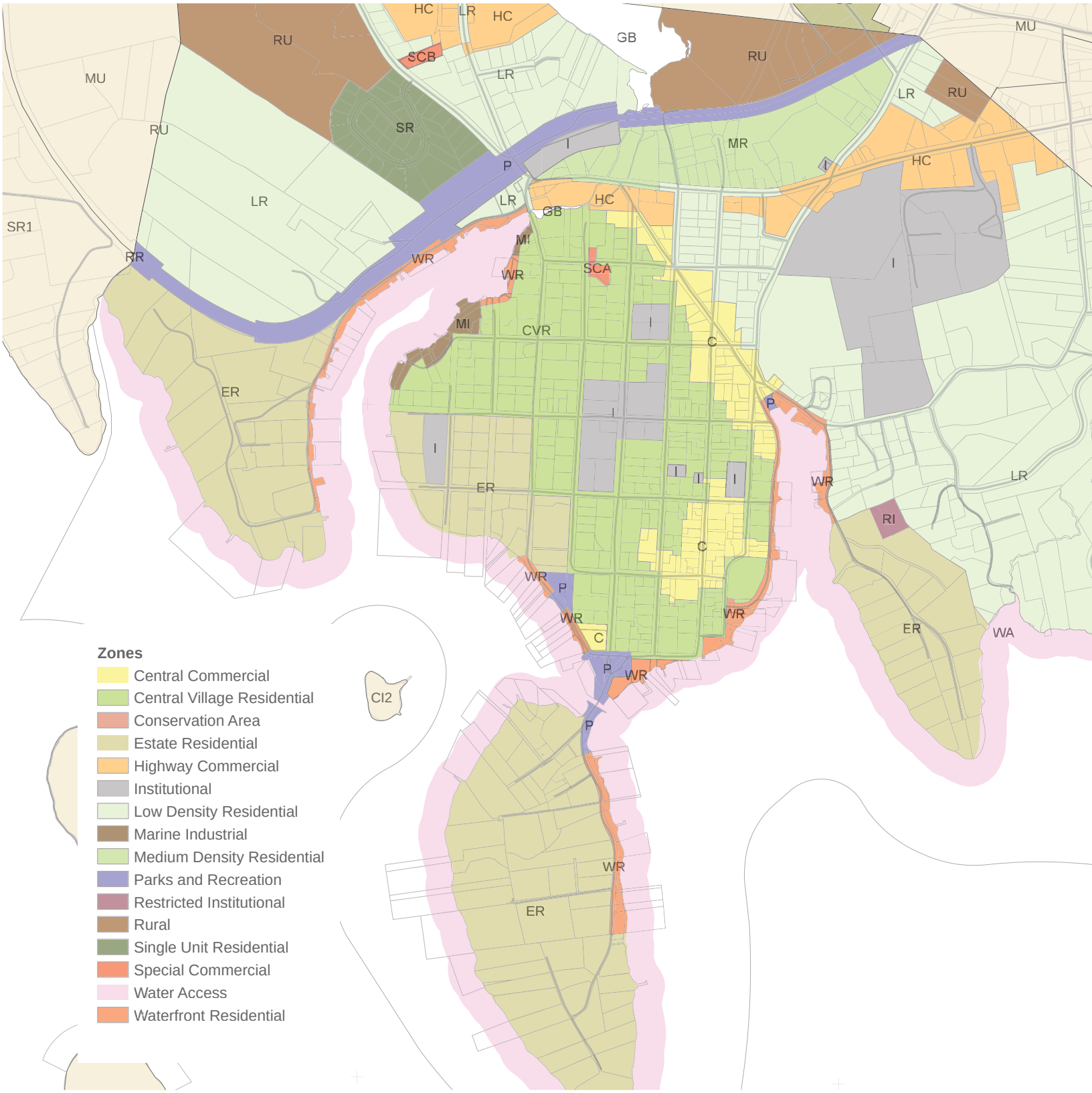
- There is a **maximum height penalty** of 2 m for buildings with a roof less than 4 in 12 pitch (i.e. in a zone that typically allows 10 m height, max height is reduced to 8 m if the roof is low-slope) (16.34)
- Public views of buildings must be chiefly clad with materials with a **horizontal orientation**, such as shingles, clapboards, brick or stone ("so that vertical siding or roofing materials do not dominate") (4.6.1(a)(ii))
- **Varied massing:** Structures with a ground floor (footprint) greater than 139.4 sq m (1,500 sq. ft.) must be designed with varied massing and roof lines, to give the effect of breaking up the overall visual mass of the structure. (4.6.1(a)(iii))
- **Two-unit dwellings** must have entrances located in separate masses so that entrances appear to be in different sections of the building (4.6.1(c)(ii))
- In the Central Village Residential zone, there is a **max of one two-unit dwelling per block** (5.6.6)
- In the Estates zone, a **second dwelling unit** is permitted but it may not exceed 56 square metres (600 sq. ft.) in floor area. (5.3.7)
- **Accessory Structures** are permitted, but may not exceed 65% of the footprint (ground floor area) of the principal structure on a lot and they may not exceed 6 metres (20 feet) in height.

Table 2.1:

KEY ZONING REQUIREMENTS (figures in m)	Estate Residential (ER)	Waterfront Residential (WR)	Central Village Residential CVR)	Central Commercial (C)
Min front yard	7.5	5	3	0
Min side yard	7.5	3.5 [2]	3	Note 4
Min flanking yard	7.5	n/a	3	0
Min rear yard	7.5	3.5	3	3.5
Max building height	10 [1]	7.5 [1]	10 [1]	10 [1]
Min lot area (sq m)	3716	744	744	557
Min frontage	152	6	6	6
Max site coverage	n/a	n/a	(Note 3)	n/a

Notes:
1. For roof slopes 4 in 12 or less, 2 m is deducted from max height
2. Max total building width is 20% of lot frontage in this zone
3. Max coverage is based on lot size as follows:
under 372 sq m 40% max
372 to 744 sq m 30% max
744 to 1488 sq m 20% max
over 1488 sq m 15% max
4. One side 3.5 m, other side 1.5 m

Figure 2.10:



Zoning Map (Map Data source: Municipality of Chester)

3.0 What We Heard



3.1 Overview of May 2022 Engagement

The goal at this stage of engagement was to share information and discuss objectives related to character in Chester village. Engagement was completed between May 5 and May 30. The following tools were used. (Number of interactions indicated in parentheses):

- Online survey (20)
- Meetings with stakeholders, Chester Village Commission, and the Village Planning Advisory committee (10)
- Two hybrid in-person/virtual community meetings at the Legion on May 18 (22 in-person, 3 online)
- Emails and phone calls

The consultant team delivered presentations to facilitate discussions, while further information was made available via a Discussion Paper online. Public meetings were attended by senior staff and the local area councillor.

The following questions were asked on the online survey and at events:

- Are there character-defining features in Chester Village that we missed?
- Do these character areas generally match how you perceive the Village?
- Do you agree with the preliminary guiding principles? Why or why not?
- Are you likely to move in the next 5 years to a different residence? What are the key reasons for you to either stay or leave in your current residence?
- What should be some of the specific objectives among elements relating to "Site Design," "Building Design," and "Community & Social Needs"?

Below are summaries of the responses we received to these questions.

May 18 community meetings





3.2 What We Heard

Are there character-defining features in Chester Village that we missed?

Many respondents had minor additions or comments, but generally felt the list was comprehensive.

Do these character areas generally match how you perceive the Village?

Most respondents felt the character areas were accurate. Some did not feel that the term "estate" area had the right connotation as there are many moderate homes with local residents year-round in this area.

Do you agree with the preliminary guiding principles? Why or why not?

Most agreed with the guiding principles, but many expressed concerns around implementation. Some disagreed with the principle that new construction ought to be distinguishable from historical buildings, instead believing that new construction should be indistinguishable from older buildings and that contemporary architectural design should be discouraged.

Are you likely to move in the next 5 years to a different residence? What are the key reasons for you to either stay or leave in your current residence? (Survey question)

The majority of survey respondents (70%) noted that they are unlikely to move in the next 5 years. A number of key themes came up in consideration of this question, both with regards to community strengths (i.e. reasons to stay), as well as threats (i.e. reasons to leave).

Strengths identified (i.e. reasons to stay):

- Knowing neighbours and having a longstanding sense of community
- Family history in the community
- Walkability
- Proximity to services, such as health clinic, school, amenities, parks, shops and waterfront

Issues and threats identified (i.e. reasons to leave):

- Replacement of existing older homes and gradually losing neighbours
- Short-term rentals do not contribute to community cohesiveness
- Parking congestion
- Desire to downsize
- Concerns around health and mobility
- Desire to realize capital from selling house
- Neglect of neighbouring properties
- Increased cost of living

What should be some of the specific objectives among elements relating to "Site Design," "Building Design," and "Community & Social Needs"?

The following are the key themes of the objectives described by respondents to the survey and the comments we heard at community meetings and stakeholder meetings:

Scale and pace of change is seen as a threat. Some newer designs are seen as too large and not sympathetic to the village character.

- Residents have experienced modest buildings being replaced by much larger ones, and that this shift in scale changes the street character.
- Residents perceive that there have been insensitive additions to older homes.
- Desire for consideration of a max footprint
- Some expressed a desire to explore a Heritage Conservation District beginning in a small area, which might include the southern half of the central village, and inclusive of Nauss Point and the Peninsula. The following goals were expressed in support of the proposal to consider a Heritage Conservation District:
  - » Area has a high concentration of older homes
  - » Area homeowners are perceived to be receptive to the idea. This is especially the case if the proposal is accompanied with financial assistance in maintaining older homes.
  - » An aspect of the proposed heritage conservation district is that it covers an area with mixed age of buildings. One aspect proposed is not necessarily a ban on demolitions, but a rule that if an existing building is torn down in the proposed Heritage Conservation District the replacement allowed would not be permitted to

be larger in floor area than the existing structure.
    - The overarching value of the conservation district idea is to consider the buildings, and landscapes in Chester to be a community asset, and to slow the pace of change, especially demolitions and erosion of sense of character.
    - The conservation district is considered to potentially relate to landscape features as well, for example by exploring tools to support tree retention and planting of certain species in landscape design.
    - Concerns raised for the concept of a Heritage Conservation District included administrative costs and burdens, as well as negative impacts, limits or burdens on property owners.
- Other options to address scale and pace of change concerns were raised by the consultant team:
    - Seeking additional registration of properties as municipal heritage, given the large number of unregistered buildings over 100 years old.
    - Modelling Land Use Bylaw changes after the Town of Annapolis Royal Land Use Bylaw, which includes a requirement that development on properties abutting registered heritage receive feedback from the Heritage Advisory Committee to guide built form compatibility with heritage neighbours.
    - Introducing a variable limit on new structure footprint size (e.g. new structures may be no more than 25% larger than the footprint of the average size structure on a block, or no more than 10% larger than the largest existing footprint on the block).
    - Introducing a max footprint for single family dwellings.

Design and Style

- Analysis indicated a mix of styles throughout the village study area, with Cape Cod and New England related styles being prominent, while more contemporary designs are also found. Some commented on the positive nature of a mix of styled and building eras, recognizing individuality throughout building eras and contemporary designs from recent decades, while others felt that more contemporary designs were out of place.
- Concerns around buildings being "out of character" usually were associated with questions of scale, prominence along the waterfront and within the topography, use of materials, including expansive glazing and exposed concrete, and roof shape.

Materials and Windows

- The limit on vertical siding in the land use bylaw was in response to a specific building that was unpopular for its vertical metal siding. The rule may be seen to have unintended consequences, such that, for example, a board and batten house cannot be built, and such a house would not necessarily be undesirable to permit.
- Use authentic and eco-friendly and high quality materials - some feel there should be no manufactured homes, no vinyl or plastic siding. However: being strict about the materials and only permitting premium finishes will discourage anyone but the wealthy to come here.
- Suggestion to limit glazing to a maximum dimension or ratio on building faces.
- Controls over materiality should have consideration for what aspect(s) of a building are in the public view (non-public views are of a lesser concern). For example, buildings in the Village are most often seen from streetfronts, whereas Estates area houses may often be viewed from the water.

Roof shape

- Some commented that low slope and flat roofs should not be permitted, while others felt that they could be appropriate, if they permit a better view to the water.

Landscape and topography

- A connection to how the building sits in the site and topography is important. Consider views of neighbours, scale/setback in comparison to neighbours, as well as noise, light and traffic.

Regulatory burden, flexibility and special uses:

- Ensure the regulations do not inadvertently prevent desirable outcomes. For example, so asked to ensure that uses like a mosque, a small apartment building or another retirement residence, not be precluded due to architectural controls.

Support for home owners

- Financial help maintaining historical buildings is desired.

Commercial Areas

- Encourage additional commercial services in the Central Village commercial area. This might include a larger general store, grocery, family restaurants, and other uses.
- There is a recognized history of buildings converting back and forth from residential to commercial, but

there has been a perceived reduction in the critical mass of the community-serving and visitor-serving retail in the centre of the village (i.e. Pleasant, Queen and Duke).

- Facades in the downtown should be required to add to the current rhythm and aesthetic. For new commercial uses (e.g. the Hotel proposed), look to encourage something that reflects the village, not a generic chain concept style.
- Vitalization of the Central Village sees support with the potential for Water Street to have an added boardwalk. With the Tancook Island ferry gone, the dock could be taken over by the municipality or Develop Nova Scotia and become maintained as a destination – it can have events, boat tours, food trucks, vendors.

Waterfront Residential areas

- Fences in some cases block views at houses and wharves – consider additional regulations around height, materiality and opacity.
- In the waterfront residential zone, the 20% width restriction is perhaps not the best way to preserve views. What's more important is the view from the street to the water, and this has more to do with roof height and shape, and topography relative to the elevation of the street.
- Consider moratorium of construction of new dwelling units in the Waterfront Residential zone.

Marine Industrial area

- Marine industrial zone should be a consideration. This is the only area that does not allow residential. Is it important for character to limit it so it is only marine-related commercial uses, and not dwellings?

Housing options

- Mix of generations and housing options is needed, including generally smaller and more affordable units. Allow for modestly sized additional secondary suites and other housing options including granny flats, small cottages at the back of residential lots and flats over garages.
- Families with children seen as a thing of the past but there could be a resurgence especially for people to work from home or commute to Halifax.
- It may be desirable to allowing more secondary suites options, or for people to buy and subdivide.

Outbuilding design

- Outbuilding design should be complementary to primary buildings.

Sustainability

- Promote sustainable building practices.

Accessibility

- Important for aging in place and catering to retirees – accessibility is often associated with downsizing.

Streets, street character and parking

- People are encroaching on the streets with trees, gardens, boulders, etc – some landscaping is good, but some is not.
- Parking should be managed, with summer parking at school or rink and shuttled at Race Week.
- There used to be many more trees on Queen Street – the preservation of trees should be emphasized with both the municipality and the Provincial Dept of Public Works.

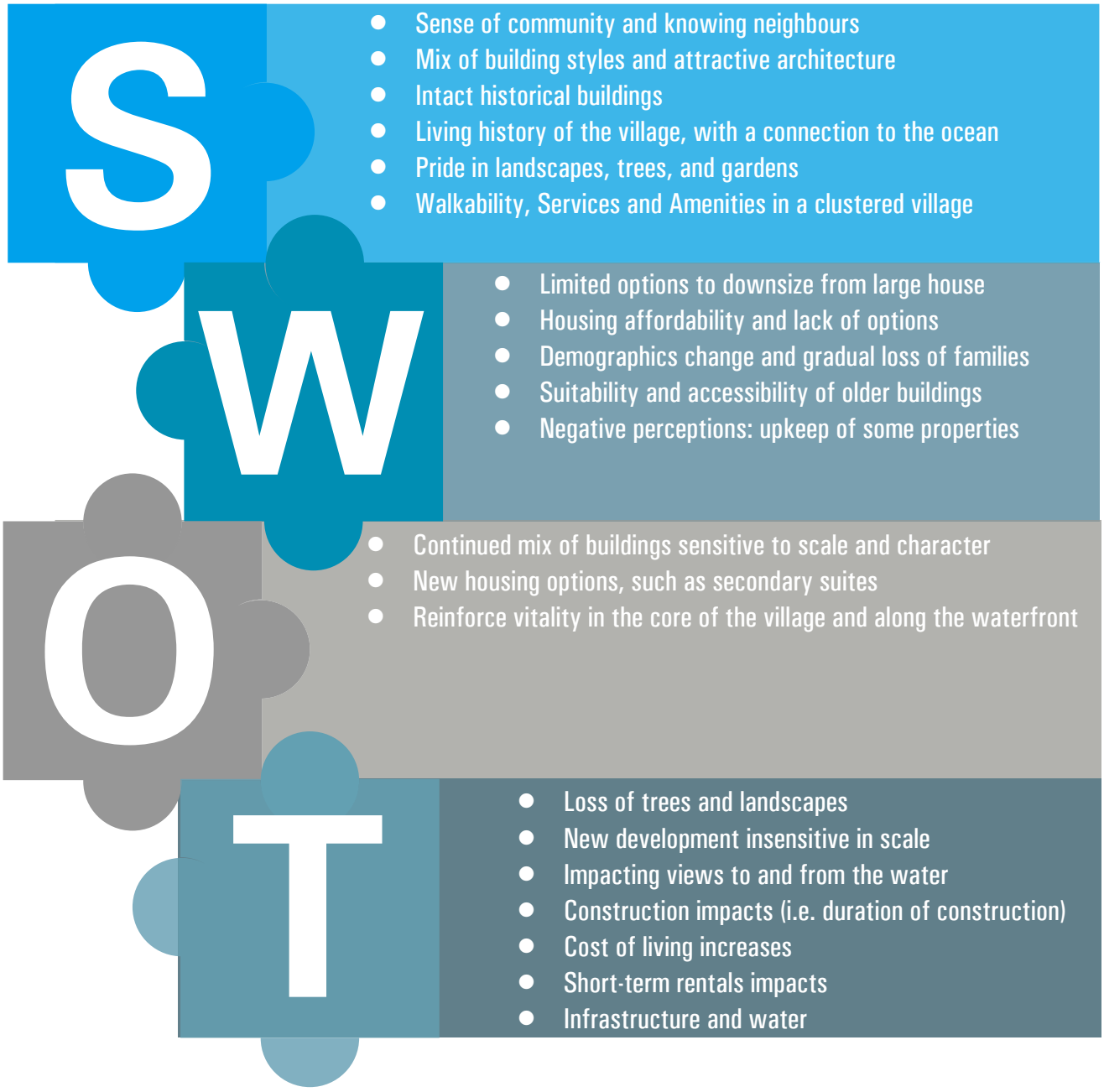
Other topics

- The Estates residential zone has a negative connotation with the word estate – some houses in the area are modest. Consider providing a generic name e.g. "large-site residential."
- A tree protection bylaw should be considered.
- Regulations for short-term rentals are important – issues raised include noise, parking, loss of workforce housing, weakened sense of community from lack of consistent occupants.
- Important to address parking and truck movement.
- Ensure upkeep and maintenance of properties.
- Ground water supply is a concern.
- Long-term construction impacts has been a problem – explore ways to ensure construction does not take so long.

3.4 Strengths (S), Weaknesses (W), Opportunities (O) and Threats (T) for character in Chester

Figure 3.1 provides a summary of the common themes that emerged through engagement on village character.

Figure 3.1: Strengths (S), Weaknesses (W), Opportunities (O) and Threats (T) for character in Chester



4.0 Policy Considerations



4.1 Policy Considerations

The following considerations are presented for the municipality in response to the Study findings. Many of these considerations are specifically focused on the land use bylaw as the most common tool used by the municipality to control new development. However, many complementary programs can be considered to provide other means to preserve and enhance character. These alternatives (which are not thoroughly discussed in the Study) can include further supports for culture, heritage and beautification.







THEME 1: Building Height and roof shape

Policy Considerations:

- Consider alternative methods for calculating height, such as using average grade as the base of the height, and/or considering allowable height with some relation to the grade at the street.
- Consider height precincts for variation in maximum heights in different areas of the village in a way that considers topography, context, and views. There is the potential that height may be defined slightly differently in different contexts, for example with water view sites or sites with very steep topography.
- Consider different methods for encouraging high sloped roofs, while still permitting low-sloped roofs.

Discussion:

Considering that there is often a significant topography for sites in Chester village, many houses are built on a slope with an exposed foundation either on a side, front or back of the house. The downslope is sometimes used as a secondary entrance or carport. Where houses are on sites that slope down towards the water, it is common for a house to have an additional story exposed on the water side and capitalize on these views.

In its definition of height, the Chester Village Land Use Bylaw uses a relatively stringent criteria, insofar as height is measured between the lowest elevation of ground around the building to the peak of roof. In other jurisdictions it is more common to use the average finished grade around the structure as the basis for height.

There is a sensitivity for larger scale structures being built, especially within the view to or from the water. The topography of Chester does allow for buildings

to be recessed within a slope, and this has often been practiced in historical buildings. However the current way of measuring height does not encourage buildings to do this, since the partially recessed floor is fully considered as part of building height. Using an average finished grade as the basis for height may encourage recessed structures.

Another consideration is for maximum heights is to vary heights in different areas of the village in a way that considers topography, context, and views. There is the potential that height may be considered differently in different contexts, for example with water view sites or sites with very steep topography. In some cases, it may be important to consider building height as experienced either from the street or from the water.

In some cases, the height experienced at the streetline, or with reference to the grade of the street, is the most important consideration (although this may be less the case for buildings that are well setback from the street.) For peaked roofs, it is sometimes common practice to measure height up to the midpoint between eaves and peak, as doing so may encourage steeper rooflines.

Within the current Land Use Bylaw, the maximum height of a building is reduced by 2 m for buildings with a roof slope less than 4 in 12 slope. It was noted in Chester Village that a steeply sloped roof is common but also that many roofs on older buildings are low sloped. Many have a variety of slopes due do dormers or mansard roofs. The 4 in 12 slope is not common as part of legacy buildings over 100 years old, though it did appear in structures built after the 1960s. Steeper sloped roofs might be achieved by measuring height to a midline of a roof for steeply sloped roofs, or with three height limits that vary based on slope (e.g. low slope, mid slope, high slope max height categories).

Through engagement, it was noted that many structures, including some iconic structures, currently do not conform with these height regulations. They either have a height greater than 10 m (as defined currently) or a height that exceeds 8 m but with a low sloped roof. The non-conforming structures are not necessarily considered to be out of character.



Varied roof shapes, including gables, are a characteristic of Chester. The newer infill building represents an approximate slope of 4 in 12.

THEME 2. Aggregated massing

Policy Consideration:

- Consider maintaining current requirement that buildings with a footprint greater than 1,500 sq ft achieve aggregated massing with varied roof lines.

Discussion:

As a historical village, renovations to buildings are often experienced and noticed through aggregated massing to break up the size of a building. Newer buildings that exceed 1,500 sq ft in footprint are required to break up the massing to match this aspect of character. It appears that the current regulation of requiring varying rooflines for buildings exceeding 1,500 sq ft footprint should be maintained.









Jib House with varying roof line to conform with aggregated massing requirement.



Building on Water Street with aggregated massing. This house also has a significant prominence of attached garage

THEME 3. Materials and glazing

Policy considerations:

- Remove limit on vertically-oriented siding, considering instead whether lower-quality or less sustainable materials ought to be limited in some development scenarios.
- Consider a size limit for glazing per building face.
- Consider that the above restrictions might only be triggered on public-facing aspects of a building (i.e. from the street or from the water), and/or in larger developments, or development on sensitive sites.

Discussion:

While the current land use bylaw requires a building to predominantly be clad with horizontally oriented cladding, this precludes some design options, and some buildings clad in stucco or vertically oriented wood are non-conforming.

Through community engagement, discussion considered the quality of building materials, especially with the legacy of buildings predominantly clad in wood. At the same time, new building materials may present more sustainable, affordable or lower maintenance options. Concern was raised for contemporary buildings with expansive glazing, seeing such treatments as out of character. Glazing is also a sustainability consideration, as large areas of low insulative glazing increases the costs of heating and cooling as well as the carbon footprint of houses. Scale is important – larger and more prominent houses should have a stronger emphasis on quality of design and materials than necessarily should be the case for more modestly sized structures.

Glazing maximums can be considered, while consideration should be given that solaria and views to the water are a key aspect of life in Chester.









THEME 4. Garages

Policy Considerations:

- Limit attached garage width to maximum dimension.
- Require that attached garage be set back behind the principal front plane or pedestrian entrance of house.
- Limit width of driveways.

Discussion:

Historically, buildings in Chester rarely had attached garages and more often had detached garages. Many buildings have established carports either under a deck or to the side of buildings. A trend in new house development is to prioritize vehicle storage and include an attached garage.

While garages tend to be modest in Chester Village, it is noteworthy that some newer construction has a dominant garage door, and over time this may begin to alter the character of the village to a more suburban feel.

Policy considerations may include limiting the width of driveways to a certain proportion of the frontage, so as to maximize soft landscaping opportunities. The width of garage door max be given a maximum dimension in proportion to the width of the principal front plane of the house. Garage doors may be required to be setback from the principle plane, set under the entrance, or made perpendicular.











THEME 5. Landscaping and Trees

Policy Considerations:

- Explore flexibility in building setbacks through variance to promote tree retention.
- Define soft landscaping requirements and tree species in new development, considering both aspects of character and climate resilience, while also promoting retention of existing trees.
- Advocate for street tree retention and planting with Department of Public Works on street rights of way.
- Explore potential for a tree protection bylaw.
- Complete a tree inventory to assess health of trees and canopy in the village.

Discussion:

Trees in Chester are central to the look and feel of the village, however they remain largely unprotected from a regulatory standpoint. Trees are often within the road right of way, however many prominent trees are on private land. Further, little is known about the health of the tree inventory, nor the needs for trees that are resistant to climate change or extreme weather.

It is often common for new construction to clear a large area of land when a new house is built to accommodate construction. Without controls for landscape, new development may have minimal landscaping, for example by opting for hardscaping with little to no trees. The potential exists to require certain landscape standards in new design. This could include a certain amount of tree density or trees species to be planted with new development, or a limit on hardscaping. These requirements could be relaxed where existing trees or plantings are preserved. A landscaped front yard area may be required in relation to the size of the development (e.g. a landscaped front yard area at a ratio of 25% of a building's floor area must be provided in certain areas of the village) . A requirement to have a landscape architect work on larger building can help to ensure the landscape design is a strong design consideration.

In some circumstances, minimum setbacks further make it challenging to preserve trees and so some flexibility may be considered in setbacks through the variance process when it comes to site-specific considerations of existing trees, views, context, and topography.





THEME 6. Evolving housing needs

Policy Considerations:

- Explore additional options for second suites on a lot or in a structure.
- Consider permitting additional options for low-rise apartments, townhouses, and smaller houses so as to promote options to age in place in Chester with a greater variety of housing options.
- Name change for the Estate Residential zone.
- Review lot size minimums in Estate Residential zone.
- Promote design for sustainability and accessibility.

Discussion:

The options for two-unit dwellings (duplexes) and secondary or garden suites remains limited under the current land use bylaw, even though there appears to be a demand for these kinds of housing options. In the Central Village Residential Zone, only one two-unit dwelling per block is permitted. There is a requirement for entries to duplexes to be in distinct massings, with the entrances to each dwelling unit located in separate masses so that the entrances appear to be in different sections of the building. This may be awkward to interpret and design for, and it is not clear that entries being in distinct massings is a critical design requirement in relation to character.

While townhouse development at Millennium Drive appears to be convenient and popular as an option for living, such a form of development is not permitted within the Central Village, which is where many of the walkable destinations and amenities exist. The possibility to explore townhouses, rowhouses or low-rise apartments in specific locations in the village could be an option to consider. This would allow for people to "age in place" – that is to be able to stay within the village core without the need and cost of maintaining a single unit home. This could also be an option for people seeking smaller homes or one-level/accessible living.

In the Estate Residential zone, the word "estate" has an elitist connotation and it is not necessary for the name of the zone to carry this connotation.

In the Estate Residential zone, the minimum lot size for lots connected to central sewer is 3716 sq. m. (40,000 sq. ft. or 0.92 acres). In this zone, only a single dwelling plus a secondary dwelling unit of no more than 600 sq ft is permitted. This is a relatively large minimum lot size, and it may be desirable in areas that are provided sewer services to allow for property owners to subdivide and/or have greater options for additional units.

New housing options should promote design that consider sustainability, in terms of materials and energy performance, as well as accessibility.







THEME 7. Walkable Village Commercial Core and enhancing the connection to the water

Policy Considerations:

- Explore requirements in the land use bylaw that are specific to the Village Commercial Core with the aim to promote a cluster of walkable destinations ("walkable streets overlay").
- The walkable streets overlay may include a requirement that new development provide uses at ground level such as restaurants, shops, tourism-related services, accommodations, personal services, retail stores, cultural establishments, etc. for a minimum of 50% of the street frontage.
- The walkable streets overlay may be accompanied by maximum setback requirements, parking, loading or other design requirements.
- Explore potential for Water Street to include sidewalk or boardwalk, along with the potential for Tancook Island ferry dock to be repurposed as a destination with events, boat tours, and vendors.

Discussion:

Large areas of Chester Village are zoned Core Commercial. Much of this area is used as residential houses, and there has been a history of structures converting between residential and commercial use over their lifespan. In some commercially zoned areas, commercial uses are sporadic.

The Village Commercial Core (as indicated on **Figures 2.1** and **2.3**, previous chapter) however is predominantly commercial in nature, with a strong cluster of retail storefronts, with approximately 5 storefronts on Duke, and 10-15 each on Pleasant and Queen. The area is vibrant, especially in summer, and the village has seen increased investment in sidewalks in recent years. If there is development in the Village Commercial Core in the future, it is desirable that it is designed to strengthen the retail, service and destination nature of the area.

There is also a potential to strengthen connections to the water, especially at Water Street. This might include a sidewalk or boardwalk. There is also the upcoming potential to repurpose the Tancook Island ferry dock as a destination with events, boat tours, public art, seating, and vendors.











THEME 8. Waterfront zones

Policy Considerations:

- Review the Waterfront Residential zone's 20% max width of building and related regulations.
- In the Marine Industrial zone, consider how these lands can better serve as a connection to Chester's connection to the water, through additional uses not to include dwelling uses (Potential for a "Marine Commercial" zone to permit restaurants, and boat rentals, for example, in addition to existing Marine Industrial uses).
- Explore limits to fencing where they impact views to the water. This may include height or material requirements in the waterfront residential zone.

Discussion:

The Waterfront Residential zone contains a mix of dwellings, boathouses, and docks. The zone permits buildings at a 20% max width relative to lot width. This zone appears to have been largely built out and there appears to be little opportunity for further development. The maximum building height is 7.5 m (25 ft). Given their location, these structures are highly visible to and from the water. Considerations around sea level rise as well as views to and from the water should be incorporated when considering any new changes to the of building and related regulations. This can include regulations for fences, so as to ensure views from the street to the water is considered.

The Marine Industrial zone in the back harbour is a part of the working waterfront, relating to the village's shipbuilding history and ongoing sailing and boating culture. The area serves community needs through boat storage and maintenance. Dwelling uses are not permitted here, and consideration should be given to ensuring this remains the case, as conversion to dwelling would preclude these services. There may be consideration for a wider variety of commercial uses (e.g. restaurant and boat rental) through a Marine Commercial zone, which would provide additional opportunities for people in Chester to connect with the water. This should be considered with regard for any potential conflicts with desired marine industrial uses to remain at the back harbour.









THEME 9. New regulatory options for managing scale and impact of development

Policy Considerations:

- Scope a potential Heritage Conservation District for the Central Village as an option to preserve older structures and the scale of existing development. (Requires further analysis and community engagement)
- Recognizing a large number of pre-1920 houses, consider pursuing property-specific registration as municipal heritage properties. This might be incentivized by administrative or financial supports for heritage properties owners.
- Consider specific design regulations applying to properties that abut heritage properties.
- Explore a maximum footprint or maximum gross floor area per main building in all zones. The building size may be determined through a precincts map that considers each area of the village, or it may be considered relative to lot size, or relative to existing structures on a block.
- Consider development situations for which it is desirable to use development agreement mechanisms, rather than an as-of-right process.
- Consider three levels of project complexity, "low complexity," "medium complexity," and "high complexity" (See "Discussion" and **Figure 4.1**)"

Discussion:

Community engagement highlighted a general concern with development that is perceived as incompatible with character as being out of scale with the existing village fabric. The current land use bylaw is seen as relatively permissive towards development that may be larger in scale compared to the context. Elements of setback, landscape, view and topography are also key. Structures that are shrouded or set back tend to be less concerning than those that are prominent, and it becomes challenging for the land use bylaw to consider site-specific elements, such as context, topography, views or adjacencies. A number of considerations emerged out of this conversation, as detailed in the bullets above.

While there is a concern for managing development that may be incompatible, at the same time it is important to not precluding desirable or needed uses. These could include new and emerging housing options, commercial spaces, or institutional uses. Changes in regulations should also avoid placing undue burden on minor construction or renovations.

With this consideration, the municipality may consider three levels of project complexity, "low complexity," "medium complexity," and "high complexity."

Low complexity processes encompasses small scale development (e.g. under 1,500 sq. ft footprint), renovations and additions. For low complexity projects, burdens relating to material quality or landscape quality, noted previously in this Study may be lower or may be removed.

A medium complexity process could be triggered for example in cases where development is proposed at a larger footprint and/or at a location considered sensitive (such as a waterfront or adjacent to a registered heritage property). In medium complexity projects, burdens relating to materials or landscape quality may be increased recognizing the potentially larger impact of the project. There is the option to require a self-evaluation checklist as part of the application intake for a medium complexity project; an example checklist is provided as **Figure 4.1**, which references the principles and character aspects identified in this Study.

High-complexity processes may be triggered in specific scenarios for commercial or multi-unit development that are seen as requiring a development agreement process, community engagement, and approval from council.

THEME 10: Additional Considerations

Discussion and considerations:

A number of related considerations emerged through engagement. These include concerns around ground water supply as being a necessary considerations prior to approval of new development. Community members were also concerned around the development of accommodations as well as a need to address nuisance and housing supply impacts from short-term rentals such as Airbnb. Community members also noted that some development has progressed very slowly, with a completion time of several years, lengthening the time for construction impacts. There is the potential to consider means to penalize development that proceeds at an unduly slow pace.

Figure 4.1: Draft Design Checklist

Moderate Complexity Projects: Self-evaluation Design Checklist for Applicants

Principle	**Design Response:** How have principles informed the proposal?
Appropriate and Complementary • Contribute positively to the historical context of the village • Have a scale that relates to the site, topography and neighbouring buildings	
Sensitive to Landscape and Seascape • Respect the landscape and location of buildings, tree cover, vegetation, rockwalls and fences • Consider views to and from the ocean	
Timeless and Authentic Design • Consider principles of proportion, form, composition and texture • Avoid pastiche and "faux" architectural design	
Continuity and Change • Respects historical context while also reflecting contemporary needs, including housing options, carbon footprint, durability, and accessibility	

Theme	**Considerations for proponents**	**Self-evaluation**
Compatible building dimensions in relation to adjacent areas: • Building footprint • Building setbacks • Building height	• Do the building dimensions (footprint, setbacks, height) generally align with those of neighbouring primary buildings?	__ / 40
Design elements: • Aggregation of massing elements • Roof shape and materials • Siding materials • Glazing and windows • Other stylistic elements and ornament • Sustainable design	• Is the massing of larger elements broken up into smaller components so feel more human scale? • Is there a consideration of the roof shape and style? • Are high quality glazing options use that reflect the character of the area and the use of the building, including for desired daylighting? • Are materials and stylistic elements of a high quality and do they reflect elements seen in Chester? • Are there design choices that will reduce the carbon footprint for constructing and maintaining the building?	__ / 20
High quality site design: • Landscaping and trees • Paths • Fences • Outbuildings/garage	• Is a landscape architect involved? • Are existing trees and landscaping elements retained where possible? • Do planting species and design choices represent sustainable landscaping techniques and do they reflect plantings also seen in the nearby context?	__ / 20
Contextual consideration: • Relationship to topography • Relationship to street • Consideration of views from the streets and public space • Consideration of views to and from the water	• How does the building respond to the topography and its location on the site? • What face(s) of the building will be on public view? • What views are created and what views are blocked, including views from the water? • How is the relationship to the relationship to the street (and sidewalk) considered?	__ / 20
Compatible designs are anticipated to self-evaluation with a score above 70/100		TOTAL __ / 100

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