

# *A Village Center, Again*

Chichester, New Hampshire  
Community Design Charrette  
October 17th and 18th, 2014







# Chichester Community Design Charrette Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks go to those individuals who donated their professional and personal time to make this charrette a success.  
Also, many thanks to the citizens, businesses and town officials who shared their time, services, thoughts and knowledge with us.

## The Plan NH Charrette Team

### Charrette Team

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## The Chichester Team

*Without the support and participation of all of the following individuals, organizations and businesses this charrette would not have been possible:*

**Leaders:** Ms. Lucille Noel, Chichester Heritage Commission  
Mr. Bernd Reinhardt Chichester Historical Society

Also:

Richard DeBold - Selectman  
Ann Davis – Agricultural Commission  
Thomas Houle – Planning Board  
Stan Brehm – Planning Board  
Zach Boyajian – Parks & Rec, Conservation Commission  
Michelle Plunkett – Heritage Commission, Central School  
Kate Rafferty-Hall – Heritage Commission  
Dawn Marshall – Heritage Commission  
Philip Hitchcock – Road Advisory Committee  
Donna Chagnon – Old Home Day Committee  
Kathryn Valley – Community Member  
Julie Fortier – Methodist Church representative

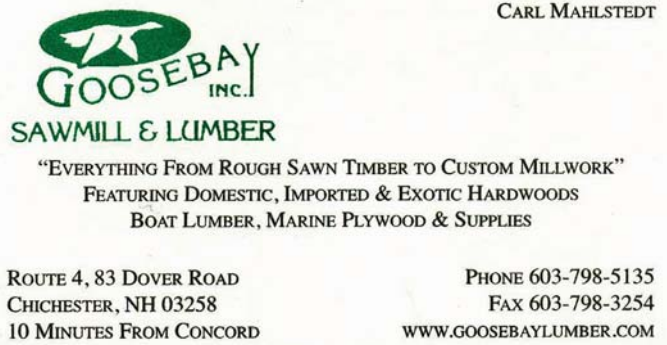
Our 37 financial donors  
Chichester Historical Society  
Chichester Heritage Commission  
Participating Citizens  
Chichester United Methodist Church  
Chichester Town Library  
Horsecorner Peddler, LLC  
Chichester Photo Group



**CHICHESTER**  
COUNTRY STORE



ESTABLISHED IN 1784  
CARL MAHLSTEDT





# Plan NH Comes to Chichester, NH

October 17th and 18th, 2014

## Who is Plan NH?

**Plan New Hampshire, The Foundation for Shaping the Built Environment** (Plan NH), is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization formed in 1989.

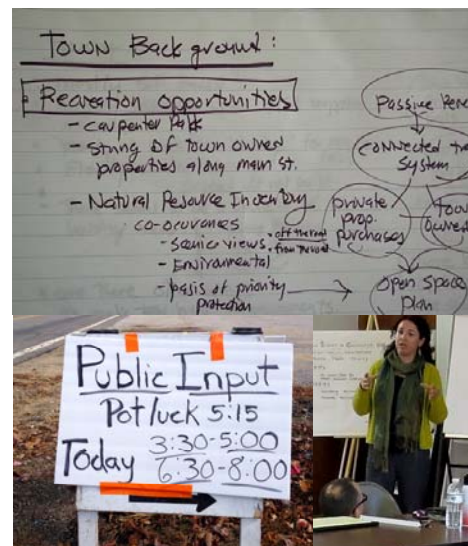
Plan NH has a *Vision* of a New Hampshire that is vibrant and healthy for its people, its economies and the environment.

Plan NH's *role, or Mission*, in achieving that Vision is to encourage good planning and design and development because, we believe, that *what* we build, and *where* and *how* we build it has a significant impact on that vibrancy and health.

Plan NH *champions principles and ideas* that balance building projects - and this would include anything built in the public realm, such as buildings, roads, bridges, memorials, public sculpture - with

- The needs of people - where they live, how they get about, what services are necessary, what they value
- maintaining the “sense of place” of our towns, cities and villages that make them unique –
  - including preserving historic assets, open spaces, agriculture and farming
- protecting our air, water, flora and fauna

Among our signature programs is the *design charrette*, an exercise that brings professionals from our membership together with our communities to explore design ideas, usually around a town center or other significant neighborhood. Through recommendations made, Plan NH can demonstrate the role and importance of the principles and ideas noted above in concrete, real examples.



## What is a Design Charrette?

Simply stated, a Charrette is a brief, intense, brainstorming session in which ideas are brought together for the purpose of defining potential planning recommendations and possible design solutions for an identified need. For Plan NH, this is usually related to a town center or other significant neighborhood in a community.

The charrette is typically of a short duration – for Plan NH, 8 hours on a Friday for listening and then another 8 hours the next day for brainstorming, crafting recommended solutions, and presenting thoughts to the community.

### **The Charrette Process:**

- Identify the need or opportunity
- Collect information from the community itself to understand more deeply and broadly the situation
- Analyze and evaluate what is seen and heard
- Develop recommendations for meeting the need or addressing the challenge



The process engages planning and design professionals in direct dialog and conversation with local residents to collect information needed in order to develop good and relevant recommendations about how to address a particular challenge. Plan NH sees this part of the process as a period of *discovery*: discovering who the community is, what they value, what they really want. This community input is essential and critical to the value of the outcomes.

The results of a Plan NH charrette are general and overarching planning and design *recommendations*, rather than specific directions. Plan NH does not dictate, but suggests. Most often, the outcome of a Plan NH charrette is described as a “vision”: an expression of how things *might be*, based on what the team saw and heard and learned.





## **Why did Plan NH come to Chichester?**

In early 2014, Plan NH received an application for a Community Design Charrette from Lucille Noel of the Chichester Heritage Commission and Bernd Reinhardt of the Chichester Historical Society. The members of the charrette committee were impressed with the thoroughness of the application and the broad support from the community, evidenced by the representation of nearly every town board and committee on the town's organizing committee. The application outlined specific challenges relating to the essential conflict between the present-day use of Chichester's Main Street and the historical importance of Main Street (and the village it bisects) to the people of the town.

Plan New Hampshire's selection committee determined that the application met three essential criteria:

1. The completed application identified a specific area of need and interest within the community, and the community was eager and ready to address it.
2. The composition of the town's charrette committee and attendance at informational pre-charrette meetings demonstrated that there was organized and committed community support already present in Chichester.
3. Chichester was recognized as a community that takes initiative and was ready and willing to follow through.

Formal approval was confirmed following a meeting between Plan NH representatives and representatives of the Town of Chichester and the Chichester Charrette Committee.



# ***The Charrette Process & Overview***

Chichester Town Officials and residents gathered with the Plan NH Charrette team on Friday, October 16th, 2014 at the Grange Hall to discuss the details of the town’s proposal with the Plan NH team. Design professionals on the team included one architect, two landscape architects, a traffic engineer, two planning consultants, two community development professionals, one builder, and a Plan NH staff member. The critical piece that the Charrette Team lacked, which only the local residents could provide, was the intimate knowledge of the Town and the vision for its future.

***Charrettes blend the broad experience of design professionals with local citizens’ detailed knowledge of their community to produce a plan of action that addresses issues of particular concern. The charrette provides an overall framework within which more detailed solutions and plans can be developed.***

The charrette application described the dichotomy between the two major state highways that run through the town (Routes 4 & 28) with heavy traffic and ample commercial activity, and the historic main street. This 2.5 mile corridor was once the site of nearly all commercial and social activity within the town, but now functions primarily as a bypass between Routes 4 and 28. The identity of the traditional heart of the village was fading and the applicants sought ideas on how to preserve and restore some of its past vitality. A key variable in the landscape of the core village was the availability of a piece of property that had been owned by longtime resident Walter Sanborn and had been offered for sale to the historical society.

An introductory meeting was held with key community stakeholders, town staff and officials, and community leaders to inform the Plan NH team about the significant issues facing the study area. Over the summer, the Sanborn property had been sold to a private buyer, but this did not dampen the enthusiasm of the tour guides as the charrette team enjoyed the unique experience of a trolley tour of the focus area.

## **Initial Impressions**

Chichester is a small town (population 2,552 as of the 2012 census) located just east of Concord. For much of the town’s history, Chichester served as a farming town, connected to Concord by the “Great Road” from Concord to Portsmouth that was built in the late 18th century and now exists as NH Route 4.

The thousands of motorists who pass through Chichester each day generally choose whether to experience the town from the highways or along its Main Street. Though all three are state roads, the feel is markedly different. Main Street, with its four sharp turns, historical properties, and open views to the south and east, feels like a journey through the type of farming town that Chichester has been for most of its history. Routes 4 and 28 connect Chichester to the Concord area to the West, Durham and Portsmouth to the East, and the Laconia and the Lakes to the North. These major state roads have been the site of considerable commercial development in the past several decades and both roads (but Route 4 in particular) feel like highways with little to distinguish these sections of road from major state highways elsewhere in New England.

It is somewhat ironic that although many more travelers pass through the traditional village of Chichester than in years past, there is no commercial activity to speak of except for the Chichester Country Store (with its famous donuts) located at the eastern end of Main Street, where it intersects with Route 28. The General Store that operated at 44 Main Street closed in 1966, and other business such as a shoe shop, tannery, and cider mill are distant memories. In spite of this, the landscape along Main Street is very well preserved along much of its length, with historic structures such as the Grange Hall, Methodist and Congregational Churches, and many 19th-century homes contributing to the feel of a quintessential New Hampshire village.

One key indicator of the extent to which a town has abandoned its village is the absence of town assets. By this measure, Chichester’s small geographical size serves it well. While the school, fire and police station, and library have all been relocated since the advent of the automobile, all of those assets are located along Main Street. This resulted in the existence of several “nodes” of activity that the charrette team considered in formulating their recommendations.



# Chichester's Challenge to Plan NH

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

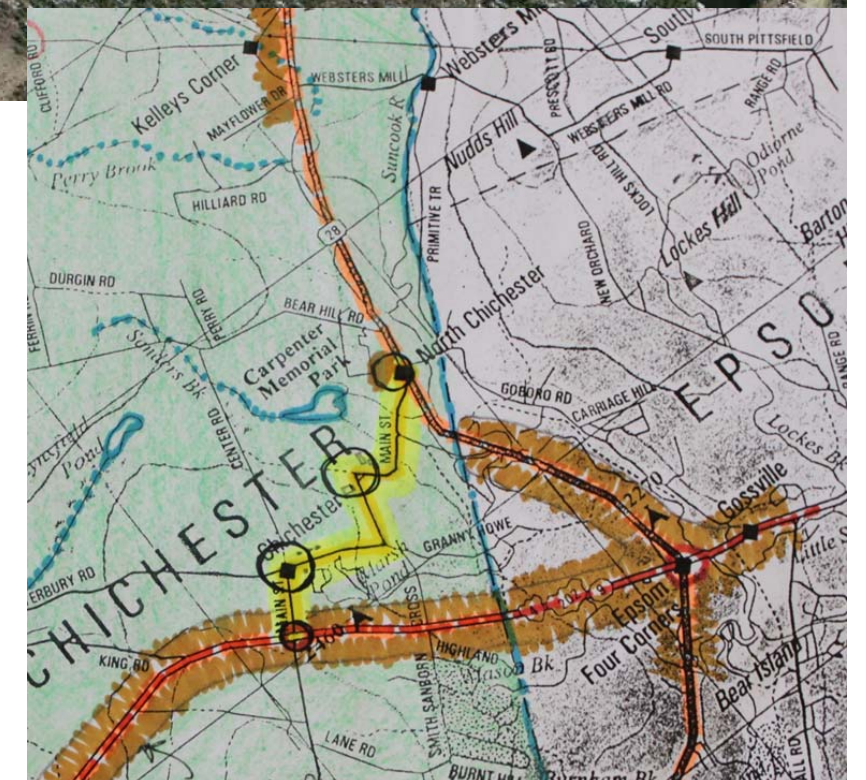
- Create a destination that will bring the town together
- Preserve scenic, historic, and cultural resources.
- Enhance access and connections of outdoor recreational opportunities.

## IMMEDIATE CHALLENGES

- High traffic counts and speeds on Main Street.
- Physical dispersal of town assets and important sites.
- State Highway design limitations on what could be done to reduce or slow through traffic.
- Funding for any road changes that could achieve DOT approval.

*"We can begin by doing things at the local level, like planting community gardens or looking out for our neighbors. That is how change takes place in living systems, not from above but from within, from many local actions occurring simultaneously."*

*Grace Lee Boggs*





# **What the Town Residents Told Us**

Two public listening sessions were held during the afternoon and evening of October 16th.

The purpose of the sessions was for the public to share their ideas with the charrette team about what they see and what they would like to see in the study area.

Residents were also asked to let the Plan NH team know what may not be known by the team about the study area and the community.

Comments from both sessions are transcribed below, along with notes taken during the evening session.

## **What Do You See?**

- **High traffic volumes including trucks cutting through.**
- **High traffic speeds with many motorists taking sharp turns at unsafe speeds.**
- **Beautiful scenery.**
- **Scenery intact due in part to benevolent owners of large tracts of land.**
- **Unprotected historical and cultural resources**
  - No Demolition Review Board
  - 18th-century Blake-Hutchinson house at intersection with Rte. 4 was recently demolished
  - The town had 93 barns in 2005; ten have been demolished in the past ten years.
- **Dangerous conditions at Chichester Central School especially during school events.**
- **Young people are reluctant to contribute to the community and generally only come together around school events.**
- **Few housing options-people who need supportive senior housing must move.**

## **What Do You Want To See?**

- **Slower traffic**
- **Less traffic**
- **Protection for scenic & cultural resources along main street.**
- **Pedestrian crossings**
- **Beautification of the area around the Grange Hall**



## **National Honor Society Ideas**

**The Charrette organizing committee took the additional step of asking a group of 7th and 8th grade students what they would like to see in Chichester.**

- Maintain an ice rink behind town hall with seating. Possible activities such as bonfire for evening skating.
- Carpenter Park improvements and maybe a town pool, and addition of summer programs geared towards teenagers.
- Make the roads more bike friendly.
- A “community center” for more town events, meeting spots, picnic areas, gazebo, possibly if land around town hall is available.
- Library Improvements, more activities for youth.

## **What Else Does Plan NH Need to Know?**

- **Several senior housing projects have come before the Planning Board including (most recently) one in the northern part of town.**
- **Soils-based zoning means that large lots are required in most of town.**
- **Chichester had a Growth Management Ordinance which was allowed to sunset in 2010.**
- **Taking Main Street back from the state has been considered and discussed with NHDOT but has not been pursued due to the cost of maintenance.**
- **Many town activities now take place at Carpenter Park (outside of the focus area) including Old Home Day.**
- **More than 25 miles of snowmobile trails exist in Chichester and many of these trails are suitable for walking in the summer. Getting from the trails north of the village center to the trails south of Rte. 4 is difficult on foot.**





# Charrette Team Observations and Recommendations

Observation	Recommendation
1. Traffic must be addressed: slowing the traffic that travels along Chichester’s Main Street is an obvious and an important objective. Slowing the traffic would probably have the effect of reducing traffic volume, as it would make Main Street less attractive as a cut-through. However, traffic calming measures must be considered in the context of Main Street’s status as a state maintained road.	In a perfect world, Chichester would have discretion to incorporate traffic calming that would slow cars and trucks to about 25 MPH along Main Street. Prohibiting through trucking would reduce traffic volume and noise. The New Hampshire DOT requires that the road be usable for all vehicles that can legally travel on the roadway, so as long as the road is maintained by the state, through trucking will be allowed and options for traffic calming will be limited. However, town leaders should clearly express their preference to the DOT and their elected representatives for a lower speed limit and engineering features to slow traffic.
2. Architectural Character is crucial to Chichester’s sense of place. Development along the corridor has been remarkably tasteful and consistent with the character of the historical buildings. The town should consider measures that would ensure existing buildings are preserved and new buildings continue to be consistent with the character of the town.	The most well-known approach to preserving architectural character in a village setting is a nationally or locally designated Historic Districts, which prevents property owners within the designated district from making significant exterior alterations to their properties without approval of a commission of local citizens. Less restrictive and perhaps more appropriate would be a Neighborhood Heritage District. NHDs regulations are generally much less stringent than those associated with Historic Districts, and can be set up so that the commission of local residents simply provides guidance rather than binding decisions. If desired by the community, the regulations could be written so that major alterations to the landscape (demolition, new construction) require approval of the commission but less significant changes are only reviewed at the owner’s request.
3. Current zoning restricts uses and setbacks in a way that is inconsistent with the traditional development pattern in Chichester.	As shown in our “Setbacks in Context” slide, imposing current setbacks would have made much of the development along Chichester’s Main Street illegal to build. Some older properties do not meet the minimum lot size. Traditional uses such as the boardinghouse and shoe shop that once breathed life into the Village are now prohibited. While the team felt that architectural regulations for the village area should be <i>more</i> restrictive, it seems that the usage and setback restrictions should be relaxed.
4. Scenic Value: the views to the south and east of Main Street are beautiful. They are an important town asset, and should be protected, to the extent that the town is able to protect them.	Working with conservation organizations such as the Five Rivers Conservation Trust and the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests is a good way to identify strategies to preserve the land without burdening the landowners. These conservation organizations can help landowners identify opportunities to sell or donate their land or certain development rights.
5. Town assets (and the associated activities) have been located at various points along the length of Main Street for years. Trying to consolidate all activity into one location would be difficult and contrary to the history of the town. Instead, focus on strengthening these places by channeling future development to these nodes and encouraging compatible uses at each of them. Increased activity at these separate places along the length of Main Street can have the effect of slowing traffic and could eventually make it more feasible for residents to travel between the nodes by foot or bicycle.	The pages that follow include recommendations for improving pedestrian safety and slowing traffic at each of the significant locations along Main Street. While some of the improvements would be costly and would likely require matching funds from the state DOT, others could be accomplished in conjunction with development projects at those locations, such as the senior housing drawn by the team at the library corner. Such projects would increase the tax base in addition to the vitality of the town, but they cannot root unless the town permits those uses.



# Corridor Overview

The study area in Chichester was one of the longest that anyone on the charrette team could remember. Main Street travels for 2.5 miles from the traffic light at Route 4, making four sharp turns as it makes its way northeast to intersect with Route 28.

The distances between destinations, combined with the unmistakable hostility of Main Street as a travel path for pedestrians or bicyclists, made the challenge of connecting these scattered sites to create a sense of place rather daunting.

Rather than trying to unify all three nodes into a single place, the charrette team elected to consider each node independently. As always, the parts of the town were considered in the context of the town as a whole.

If Parade Corner, Library Corner, and the Village Center can reclaim their traditional role in the life of the town, the activity around those areas is likely to result in demand for greater connectivity along Main Street.

The next slides propose some ideas of what a revitalized area might look like in each of these locations.

MAIN STREET ■ CHICHESTER, NH

VIEWS - WALLS - ARCHITECTURE

TRAFFIC - SPEED - TRUCKS

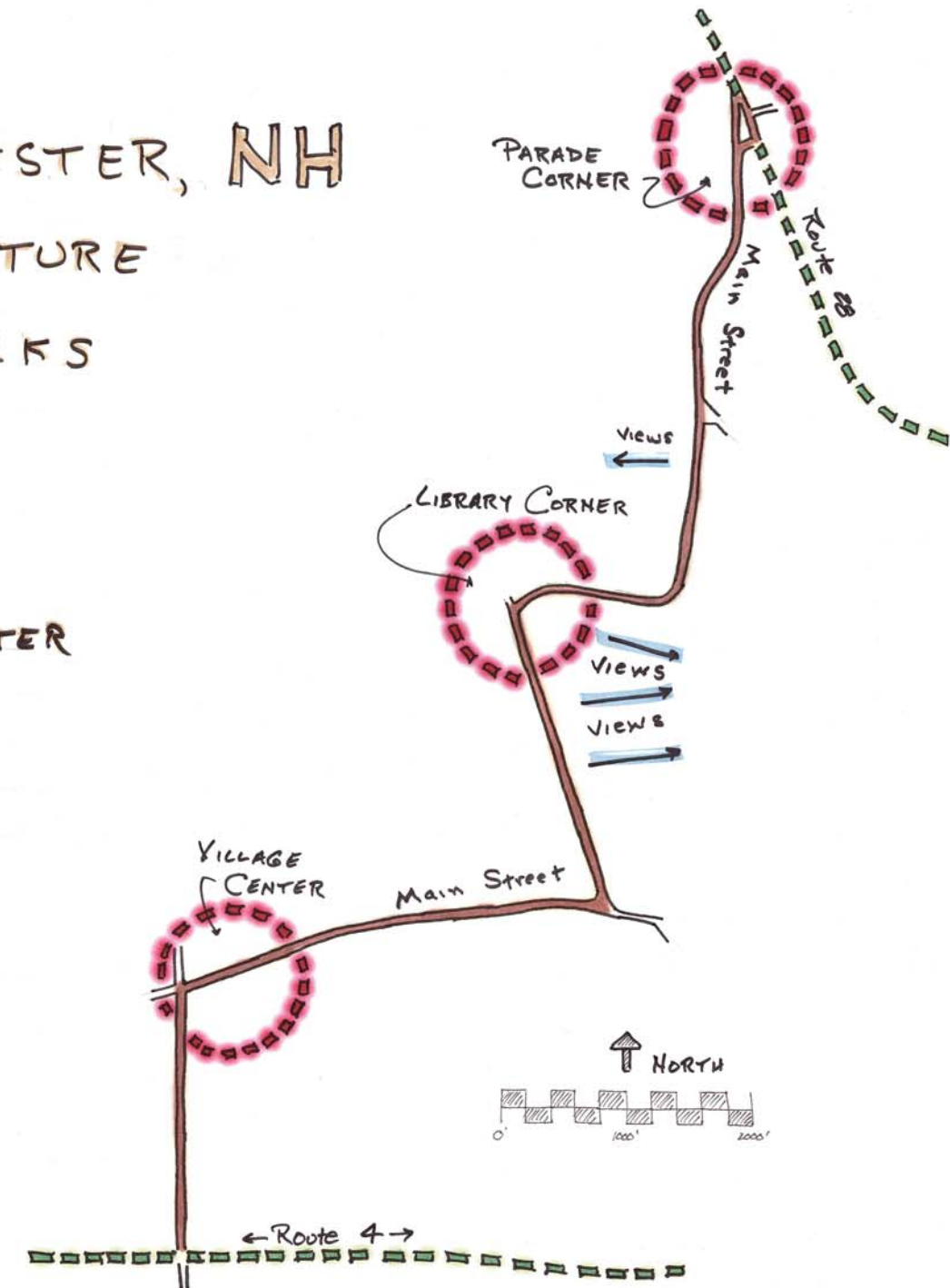
NET:

AN UNSAFE ROAD THAT  
ERODES COMMUNITY CHARACTER

NEED:

ENGINEERING SOLUTIONS  
&

REGULATORY SOLUTIONS





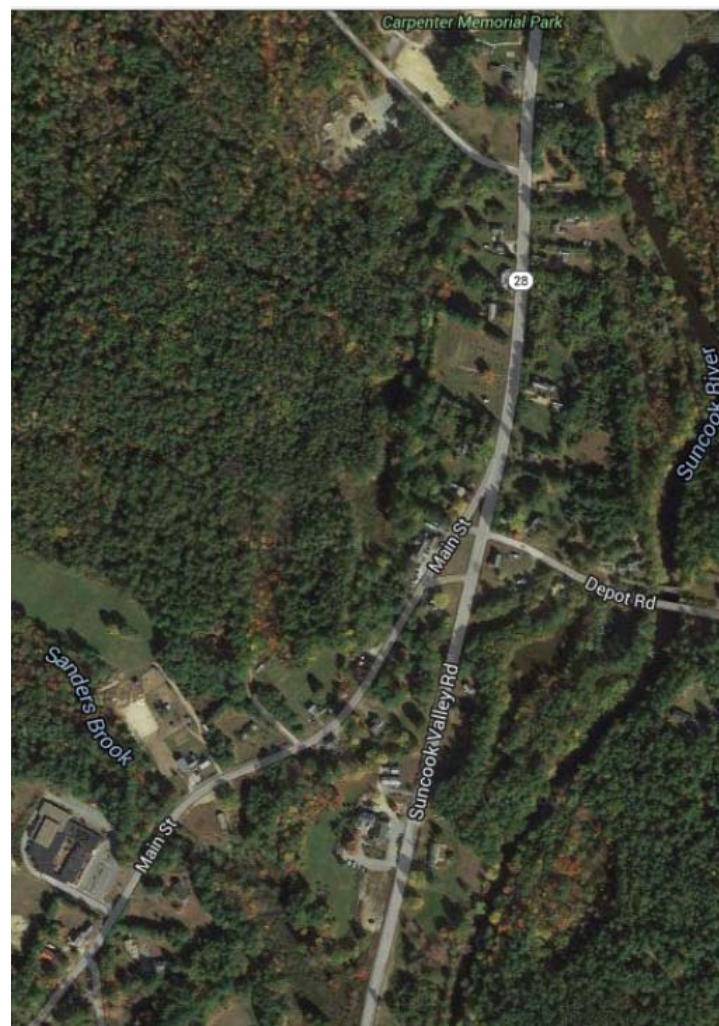
# *Parade Corner Overview*

The intersection with Route 28, referred to as Parade Corner, anchors Main Street at its northern end. This is an important and noteworthy part of town for several reasons:

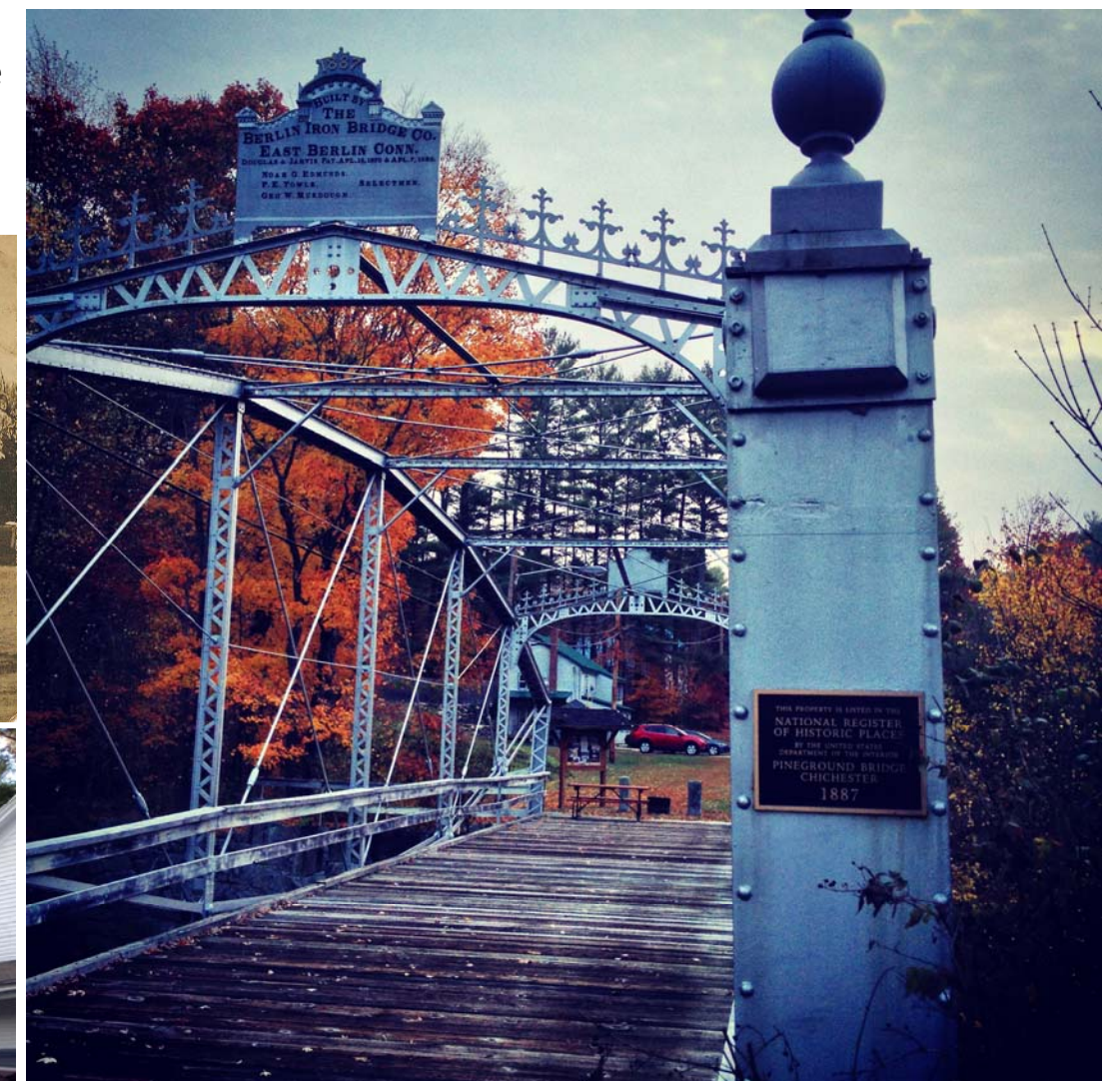
- It is home to the Chichester Country Store, a business that keeps alive the tradition of a general store as a gathering place while also serving travelers along Route 28.
- It is situated between Chichester Central School (the town's only school, serving grades K-8) just 1/2 mile to the south and Carpenter Park less about 1/4 mile to the north.
- It is adjacent to Depot Road where Pineground Bridge is just 1/2 mile to the east.

Unfortunately, even with these extraordinary community assets located within a radius that is easily walkable, the area does not feel like a cohesive place because of the speeds of cars traveling on both Rte. 28 and Main Street make travel treacherous. A fatal accident occurred at this intersection just one month before the charrette.

The next slide shows changes that could make the intersection more attractive, and safer for all types of traveler.



Chichester Country Store -then known as Kelley's Store-shown in the early 1900's and today. The store was built in the late 1700s and has been continuously operated for more than 200 years.

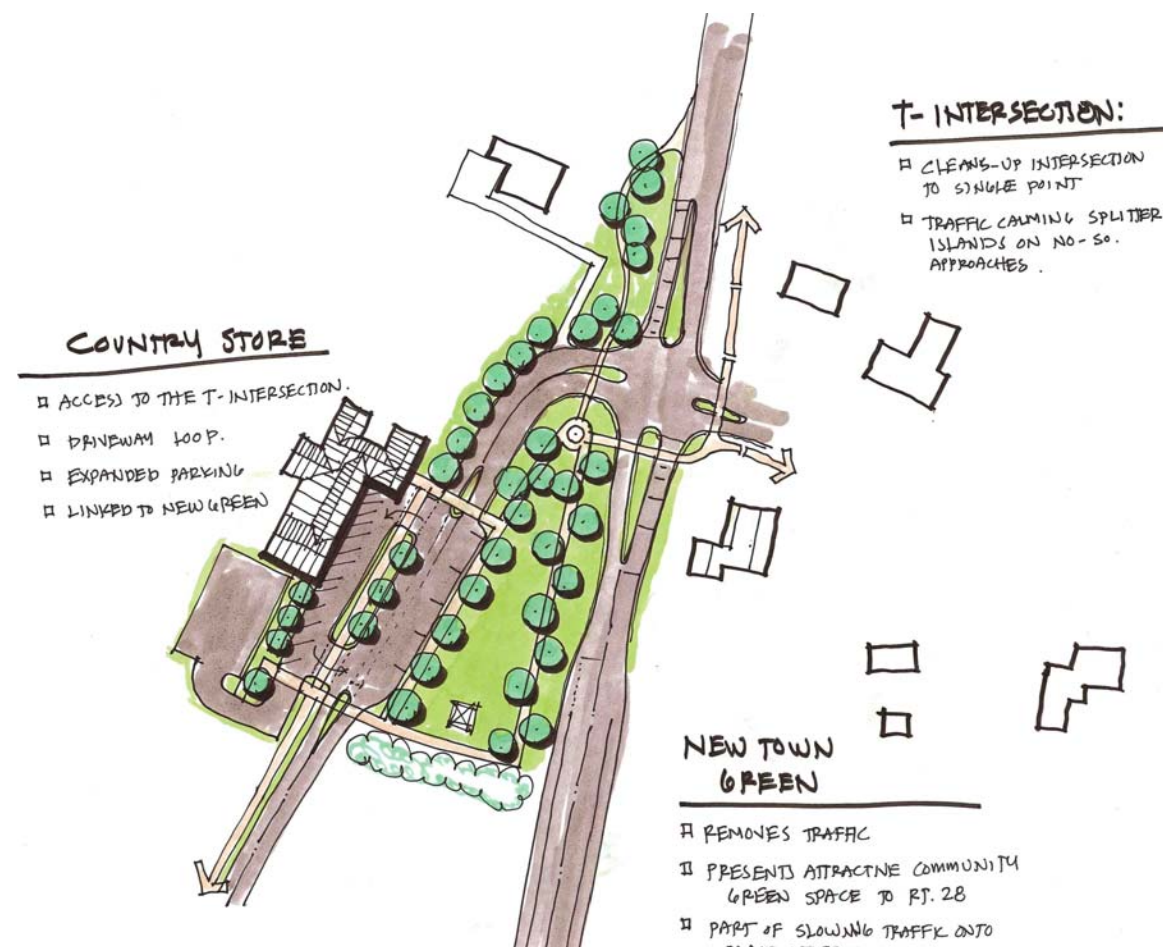


Pineground Bridge, a unique lenticular truss bridge over the Suncook River that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is just 1/2 mile to the east of the intersection.

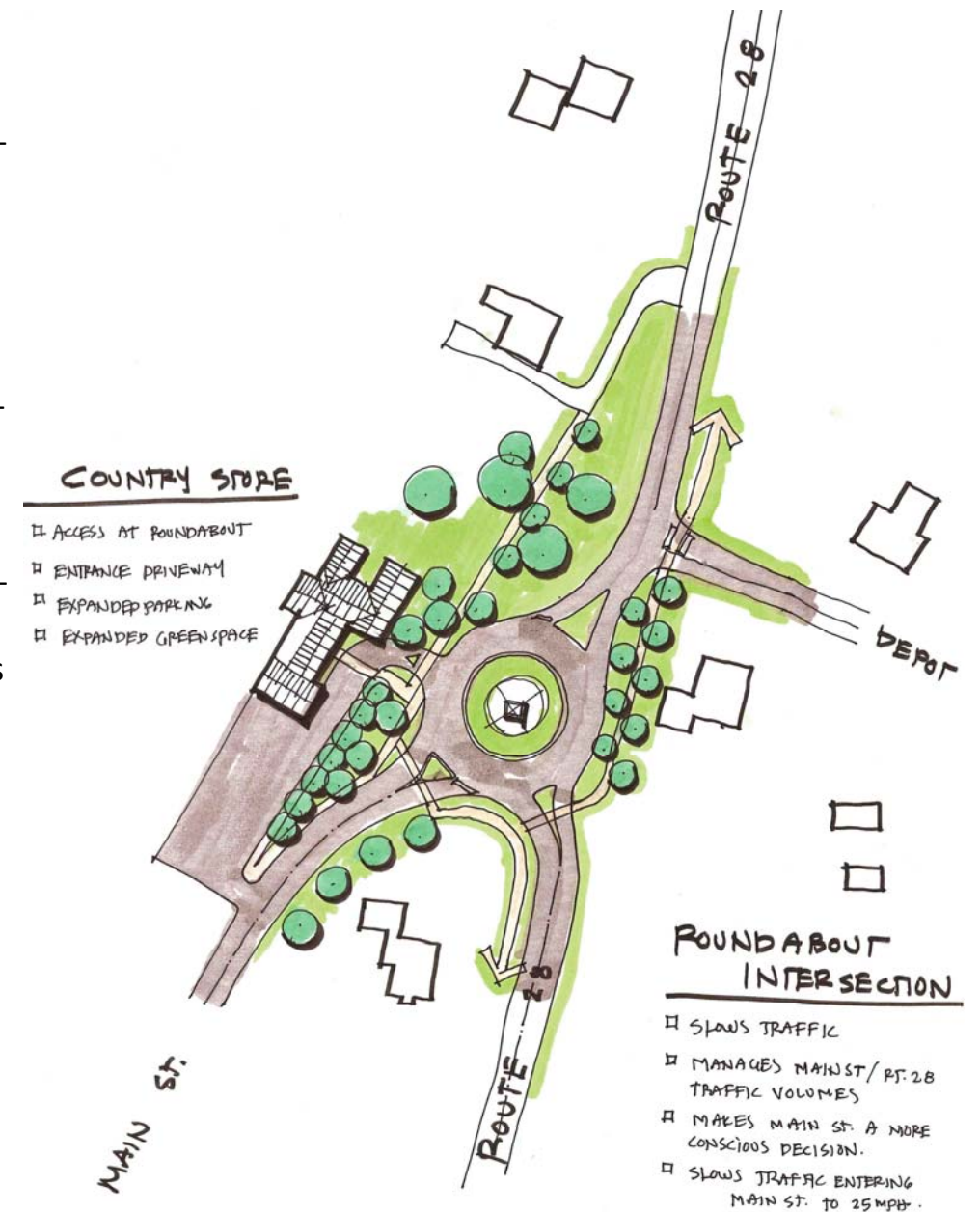


# Parade Corner Recommendations

The geometry of the intersection of Rte. 28 and Main Street encourages motorists to carry their speed when taking the right turn onto Main Street from the southbound lane of Rte. 28. Also, there is no “control” along Rte. 28 that would alert motorists to the possibility of traffic entering from Main Street; as a result, vehicles travelling in both directions on Rte. 28 as well as those turning off from the southbound lane generally travel at highway speeds. This makes turning out onto Rte. 28 nervewracking in a car and extremely dangerous on foot. The two scenarios illustrated here could improve this dangerous situation.



The roundabout shown to the right would slow traffic even more than the T-intersection and would also allow for pedestrian travel across Rte. 28. Besides controlling traffic very effectively, the roundabout can be useful as a gateway—signage could announce one’s arrival at Chichester’s Historic Main Street. However, construction of the roundabout option would be more costly. Either of the options illustrated here would have to be developed with the NH DOT, although Charrette Team member CR Willeke of the DOT indicated that these concepts are similar to designs created in the past using DOT’s Context Sensitive Solutions approach in towns such as Dublin and Pelham.



The T-intersection shown above would introduce splitter islands in Rte. 28 approaches both north and south to alert motorists that traffic may be entering.

Splitter islands also provide a refuge for pedestrians who are crossing a wide road.

Southbound traffic turning on to Main Street would make a sharper turn than is currently necessary, forcing them to slow and creating a safer environment for visitors to the Country Store and children walking from the school or Carpenter Park. This scenario would allow for tree plantings in the traffic island opposite the store. This area is currently bare and must remain so in order to maintain sight lines as long as vehicles travel at highway speeds along Rte. 28.



# Chichester Central School

Schools typically serve as hubs of community activity, and Chichester Central School plays an especially central role in the life of the town because it serves all students from kindergarten to eighth grade.

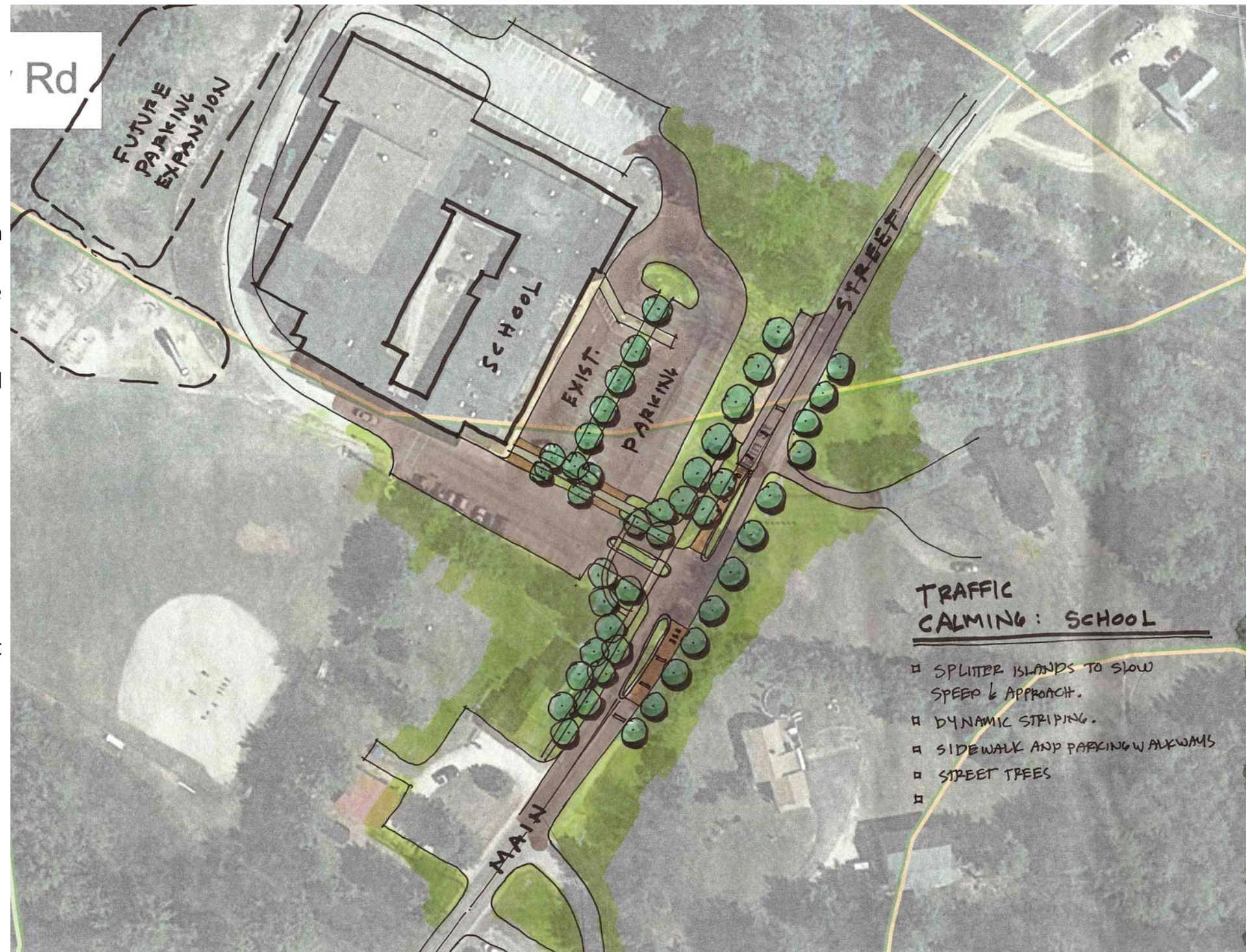
During our listening sessions, residents expressed palpable frustration at the unsafe traffic on Main Street in front of the school. Southbound motorists taking the shortcut to Route 4 in the direction exit Route 28 half a mile to the north of the school in a gently sloping lane that does little to discourage the continuation of highway speeds.

The high travel speeds are of particular concern when the school hosts events, because families park along the street and cross despite the considerable risk and the absence of crosswalks.

The charrette team recommends addressing this dangerous situation with two measures: adding more parking at the school, and slowing traffic along Main Street.

Additional parking at the school would have the added benefit of allowing the town to move voting to the school. It is currently held at the Grange Hall where there is more parking, but relocating voting to the school would allow for the conversion of seldom-used parking spots at the Grange to green space that would greatly enhance the village center.

Traffic islands and sidewalks along Main Street in front of the school would have tremendous benefit. Residents of Deer Meadow road and adjoining roads would be able to walk to the school, and connections to the Chichester Country Store and Parade Corner just 1/2 mile to the north would allow for pedestrian connections to Carpenter Park.





## *Library Corner in Context*

The sweeping turn where Main Street intersects with the the dead-end Pound Road is historically significant as the site of the First Meeting House (1791) and is now home to the Congregational Church and the Public Library, which offers an extraordinary range of programs for a town of its size.

A private home just east of the library served as a boarding house in the 19th and early 20th century, and the home-owner has preserved the fields that slope away to the east.

The panoramic photo at right, taken from the front steps of the library, show the quintessential New Hampshire scene of cow fields on the south side of the intersection with the hills on the far side of the Suncook River Valley.





# Library Corner Concepts

Library Corner was suggested as a possible site for senior housing, a need identified by residents who spoke during the listening sessions of their concern that there was no senior housing in town—those who need it must move to Concord or elsewhere.

The Congregational Church pictured on the previous page, or one of the adjacent sites, could be considered as a site for a small housing development. The congregation owns the church but their primary place of worship is a new building located farther from the road.

The Charrette Team drew two possible development schemes: one based on single story buildings centered on the church (below) and one based on a three-story addition to the existing church (at right).



Havenwood, Concord NH



Windham Terrace, Windham

Either scenario would allow for 24 to 30 apartment units, a size that ensures the project owners could deliver services on an economical scale such as meals, housekeeping, personal care services, and recreation. The library, already a community asset, would see increased use from the nearby residents, who would not depend on car travel to visit.

Splitter islands on Main Street would slow traffic and alert motorists to the possibility of vehicles entering and exiting.



# *The Village Center in Context*

*"Today we live in a world of many centers and still long for an axis mundi, a marked center of our known world."*

*Howard Mansfield*

The heart of every town is its village center, and Chichester's center-at the first sharp bend as one travels north along Main Street-has many of the components of a successful one. The Grange Hall, which houses town offices, voting, and various other municipal uses, is located here, across the street from the old fire station (now home to the Historical Society) and the Methodist Church. This is also where Chichester remembers its veterans in a small Memorial Park next to the Grange Hall.

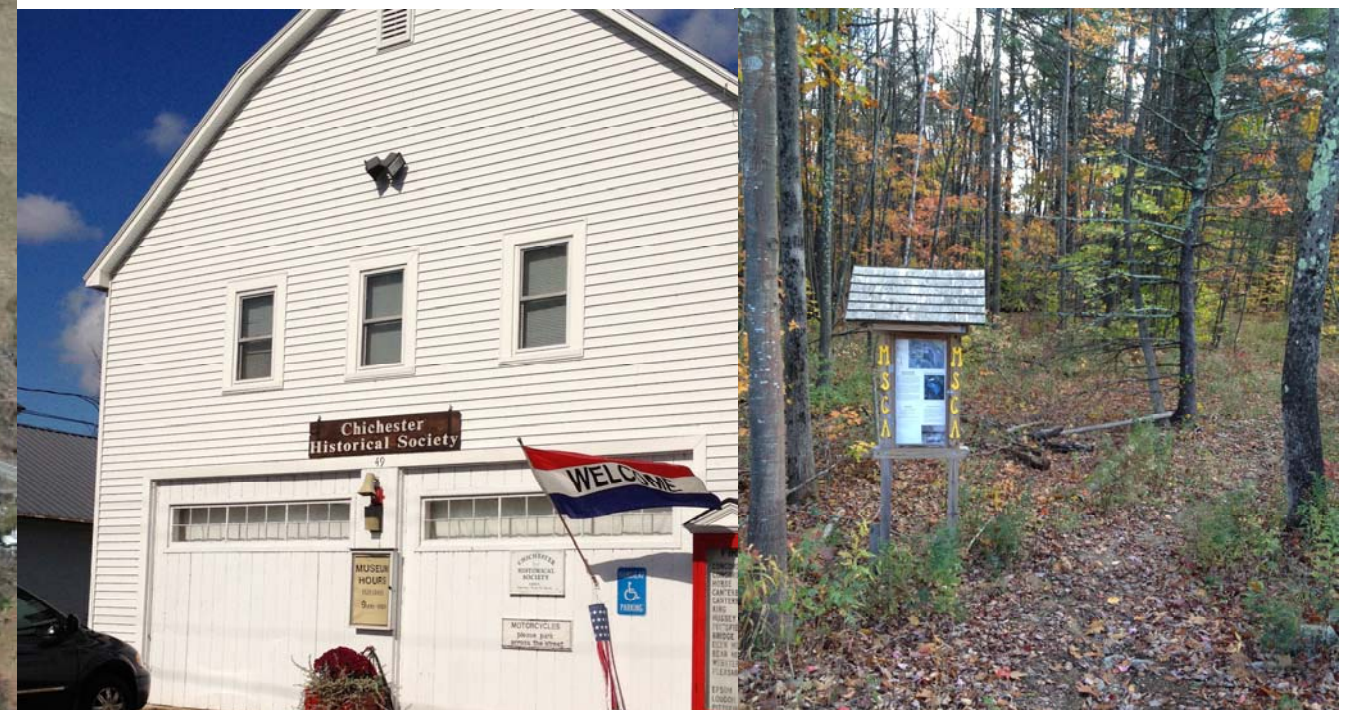
Recreation opportunities can be found in the immediate vicinity with the Madeline Sanborn Conservation area south of Main Street. Canterbury Road and Center Road are popular with bicyclists and runners.

Many of the buildings around the Chichester Village Center are as beautiful as they were when it was the hub of activity in the town.



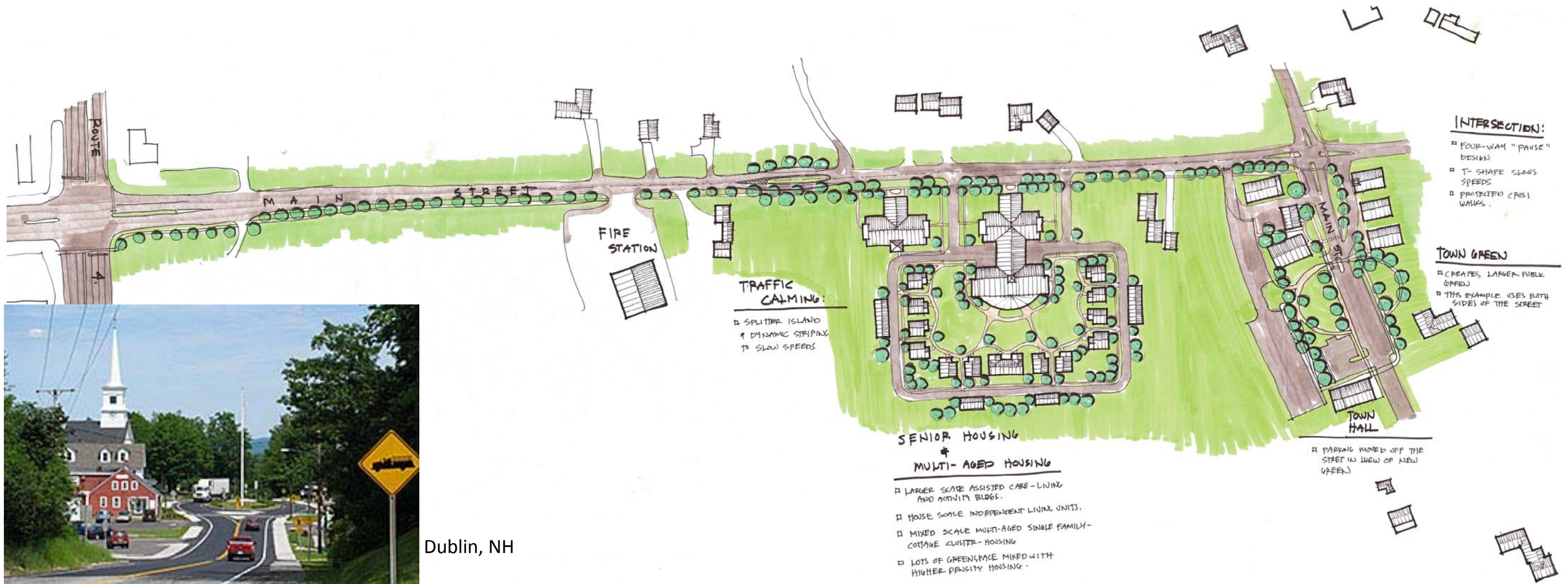
Unfortunately, the high speed of the traffic on Main Street divides the village and makes it a difficult place to spend time outside during rush hour. Crossing the road is dangerous and frightening.

The concepts on the next two pages illustrate several ways in which these assets could be brought together so that more town residents could enjoy them more frequently and more safely.





# The Village Center: Housing and Walkability



Dublin, NH

Throughout the charrette, the team heard from residents who wanted to be able to walk in and around their village center. This is not a radical notion: it is what residents of Chichester did for hundreds of years before high speed traffic made it unpleasant and dangerous.

Another common theme was a desire for more housing choices, including senior housing and apartments or cottages that could provide young people with a place to live if they don't want to buy a house or can't afford to. In a state with the highest level of student debt in the nation, and the fourth-highest median age, providing rental housing options to young people is something every town should consider as a way to slow declines in population and tax base.

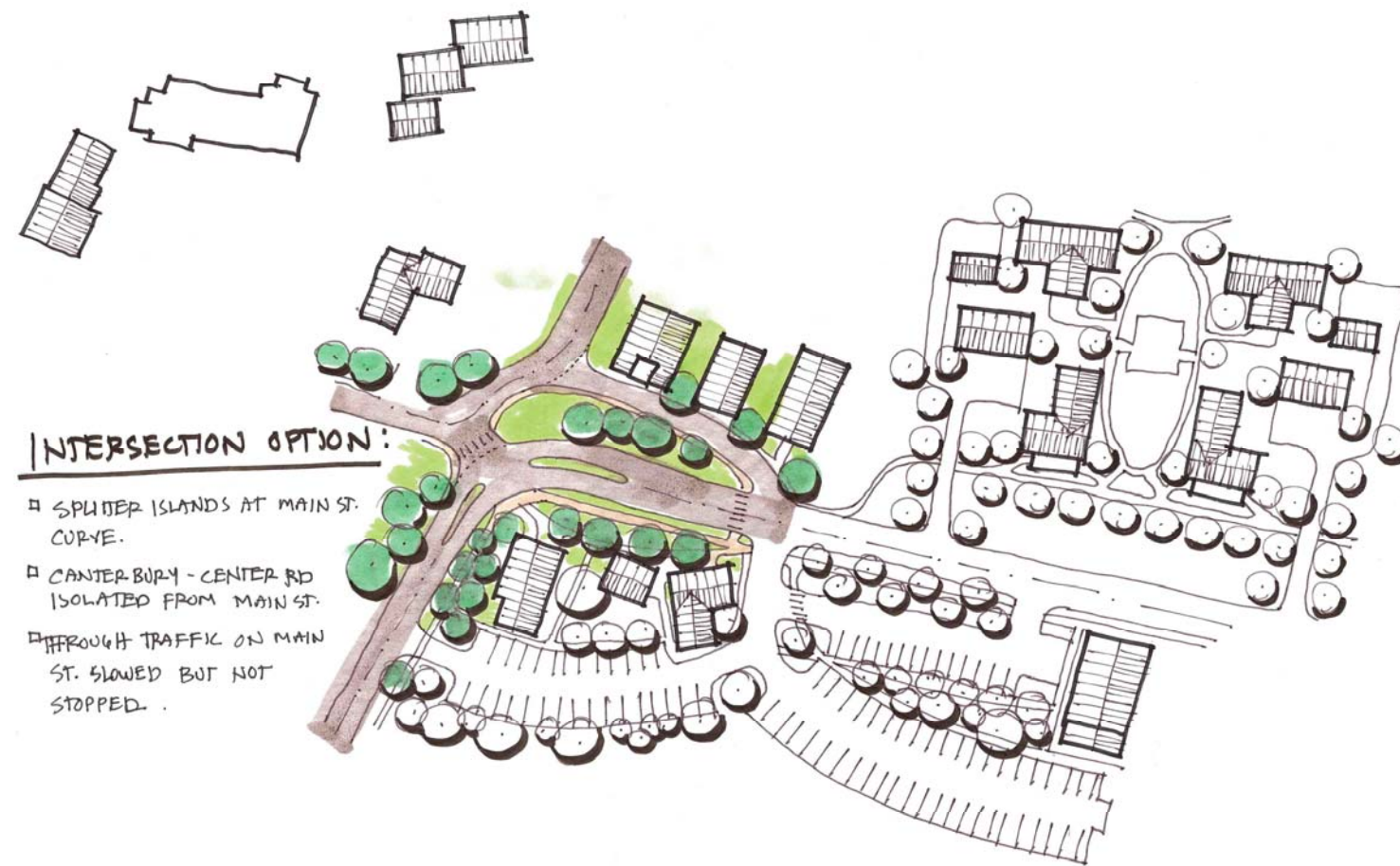
There is no more effective way to bring life to the downtown and create the conditions for small business to take root than to allow for the creation of housing within walking distance.

The lot to the southwest of the town hall and to the east of the fire station, shown here with a cluster housing development on a scale that could accommodate both senior and family housing, was recently sold and so is unlikely to present a development opportunity in the near future. Making such uses permissible would allow for such a possibility in the future whether on this lot or another one nearby.



# Village Center– Traffic Patterns

As previously noted, changes to the roadway along Main Street would have to be approved by the state Department of Transportation as long as it continues to be a state-maintained road. However, there are options that the DOT has allowed in other settings that could slow traffic at the incredibly dangerous ninety-degree turn where Main Street intersects with Canterbury Road and Center Road. The scenario shown in the illustration to the right includes a four-way stop that would immediately transform the feel of the intersection and the surrounding area. While current traffic volumes could result in backups at the stop sign during peak hours, which is not desirable for residents who are trying to get home, it is likely that many through travelers would stop taking Main Street as a shortcut between Routes 4 and 28.



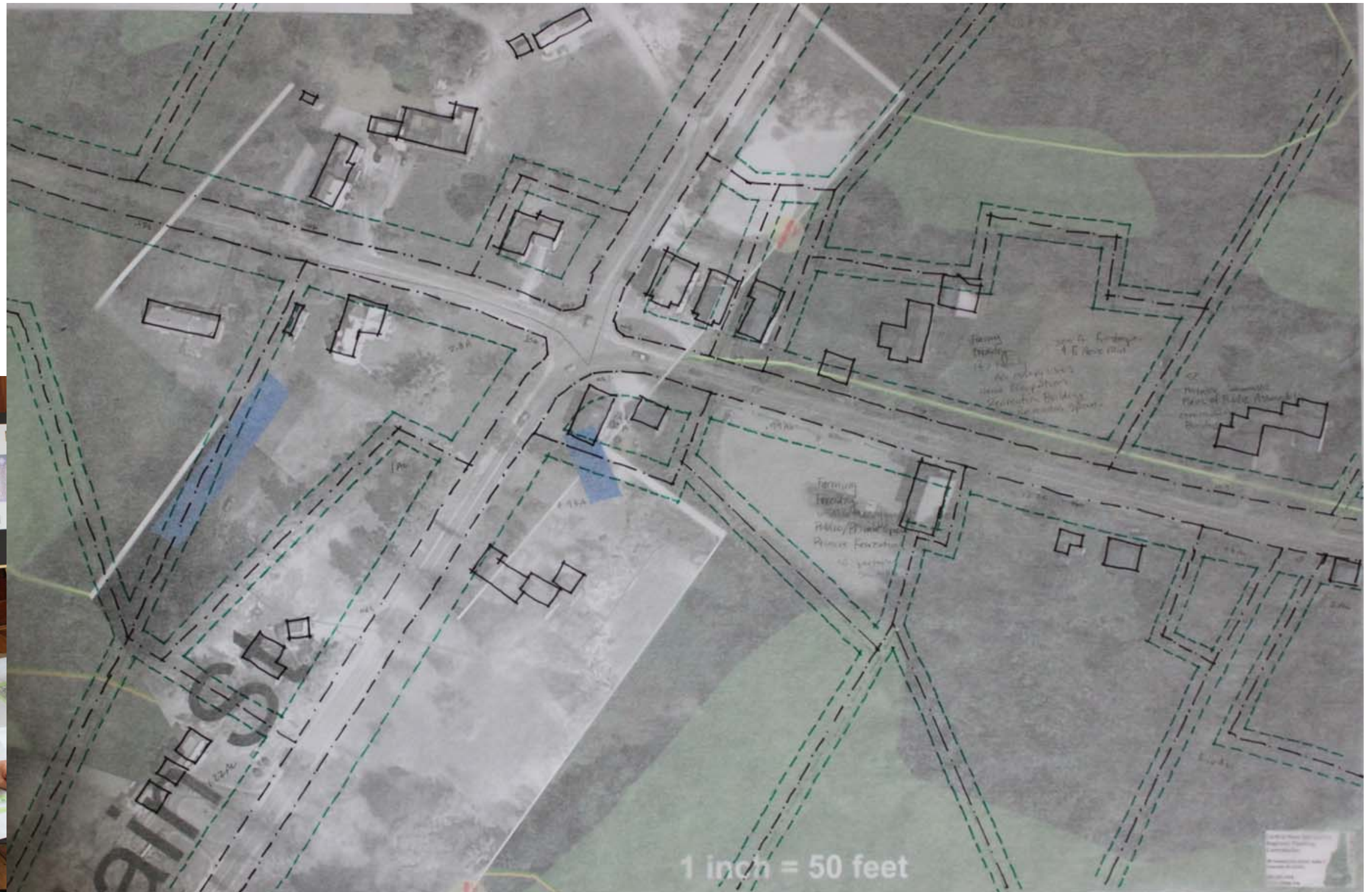
Another option illustrated at left would separate traffic from Center Road and Canterbury Road, slowing but not stopping traffic on Main Street. As in the first scenario, splitter islands would provide pedestrians with a refuge as they cross the busy street, and the presence of the islands would serve notice to motorists that other users are present and they should slow down.

Both concepts show another site location that could accommodate multi-family housing that would strengthen the historic feel of the village. In this case the site is in the fields on the Sanborn property. Small-scale multi-unit housing existed along Chichester's Main Street throughout the 19th century and early 20th century; changing regulations so that it could be permitted again would be faithful to the traditions of the town and wise for its continued economic and social viability.



## **Setbacks in Context**

When one overlays the setbacks mandated by current ordinance over existing development, many buildings lie infringe on the setbacks (15 feet from lot lines and 40 feet from the road right-of-way). The “offending” buildings include the Grange Hall, the Methodist Church, the “Union Store” at 44 Main Street, and the Historical Society. Rolling back these restrictions would allow property owners more flexibility to build on their land the way their ancestors did.





# **Zoning Considerations**



To the credit of the builders, developers, and homeowners who have built along Main Street in recent decades, the character of these newer structures complements the older ones. This consistency of architectural character is a major factor in making Chichester such a pleasant place to travel through. Just two or three large, incongruous homes, particularly if they were built on the east side of the road, could diminish the special feel of the place considerably. Likewise, any further loss of historic structures along Main Street would make Chichester less distinctive and scenic.

Chichester's current zoning classifies most of the land along Main Street as "rural agricultural." Uses are severely restricted, and minimum lot size is five acres. In theory this may seem like a good strategy to preserve the character of the town but in practice it guarantees that any new development that does occur will be sprawling and intrusive. Simultaneously, the ordinance erects barriers to owners of existing homes who might want to take on renters or operate home-based businesses in order to help bear the maintenance and tax costs of their properties. As with the current setback minimums, these restrictions on use would have made many existing structures along Main Street illegal had they been in force during the 19th century.

Consider zoning changes that vary the allowable density and uses between the historical village center and the open spaces on the northern part of Main Street.

Small-scale multifamily development in existing barns and farmhouses, or on existing lots near the Grange, would provide additional housing options for young and old.

Chichester already has architectural standards in its zoning ordinance, but they only apply to the CV zone that is located at the intersection of Rte. 4 and Horse Corner Road, shown at the bottom of this page. This site, with its two gas stations and massive right-of-way, will never feel like a village; better to focus on the traditional village just a half mile to the north.





## *Concluding Thoughts*

Chichester is a town at a crossroads in more ways than one. Characterized for centuries by its farms, many area residents now associate the town with the commercial development along the state highways that cut through it. Those who venture off of Routes 4 and 28 generally know Chichester as a scenic shortcut between the two highways. Ironically, by taking the shortcut, motorists are ruining the very village character that they enjoy.

Continuation of this traffic pattern, with road geometries optimized for the safety of car travel at the expense of other users, will result in a continued calcification of Chichester's Village center. This doesn't mean that the existing buildings will go away; they may endure for many more years. But the village will be a tableau, a static display.

The most difficult aspect of implementation is always funding. Some of these improvements can be taken on incrementally, and elements of the designs shown on these pages can be incorporated when, for example, the parking lot at the Central School or the Grange Hall needs to be repaved.

It is possible that the upkeep of roads such as Main Street will some day be “downshifted” from the state to towns whether the town wants this to happen or not. Should this occur, the town should seize the opportunity to lower the speed limit, narrow the lanes, and restrict through traffic in order to stop the erosion of village character that is taking place as a result of high traffic speeds and volume.



Additionally, changes to zoning along Main Street that relax restrictions on uses and lot sizes, while instituting architectural guidelines that would govern major exterior changes or demolition that would change the character of the built environment, would be a low-cost way to preserve Chichester's heritage.

Though our visit to Chichester was short, the team was impressed with the dedication and the spirit of volunteerism that we observed among the citizens who worked to bring the charrette to the town. This civic pride and perseverance in the face of economic and demographic challenges that face small towns across New Hampshire gives us faith that Chichester will survive and thrive in the future.

We hope that the concepts shared during our charrette, and in the pages of this book, can help Chichester look to its future while honoring its past.



# Resources

## Possible Funding Sources

**The Cooperative Fund of New England:** <http://www.cooperativefund.org/node>

Provides loans of up to \$750,000 for cooperatives, nonprofits serving basic human needs, employee owned businesses, and co-housing developments and community land trusts.

**Associated Grocers of New England** – [http://www.agne.com/charitable\\_giving.asp](http://www.agne.com/charitable_giving.asp)

The Neighbor 2 Neighbor program is a partnership with independent grocery stores that provides charitable donations to local causes.

**The Home Depot** – Community Impact Grants

Grants, up to \$5,000, are available to registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, public schools, or tax-exempt public service agencies in the U.S. that are using the power of volunteers to improve the physical health of their community.

<https://corporate.homedepot.com/CorporateResponsibility/HDFoundation/Pages/ComImpactGrant.aspx>

**The Timberland Company** – Community Involvement Program

[www.timberland.com/corp/index.jsp?page=communityInvolvement](http://www.timberland.com/corp/index.jsp?page=communityInvolvement)

**The Madeline G. von Weber Trust** -

Funds projects in community development, neighborhood development, human services and the performing arts.

**Waste Management Charitable Giving Program** -

Support for Environment, Education, and Community Impact Programs - <http://www.wm.com/about/community/charitable-giving.jsp>

**Orton Family Foundation**, [www.orton.org](http://www.orton.org) **Heart & Soul Community Planning**

OFF has funded projects in towns of various sizes to develop a vision for growth and update master plans, zoning ordinances, etc.

Their Website has a number of tools including Implementation Guides that could be useful for Chichester residents.

**The New Hampshire Preservation Alliance**, [www.nhpreservation.org](http://www.nhpreservation.org)

**Eversource Energy** – Community Giving program, [https://www.eversource.com/responsible\\_energy/serving-our-customers/In-The-Community.html](https://www.eversource.com/responsible_energy/serving-our-customers/In-The-Community.html)

## Other Public Resources

**NH Department of Transportation NH Department of Transportation**

New Hampshire Department of Transportation is a source of public funding for state road improvements, as well as safety and sidewalk improvements.

**Transportation Enhancement Act Program** - Project categories include: facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians; safety and educational activities for bicyclists and pedestrians; acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites; scenic or historic highway programs; landscaping and other scenic beautification; historic preservation; rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities; preservation of abandoned railway corridors; control and removal of outdoor advertising; archaeological planning and research; environmental mitigation to address water pollution due to highways or vehicles; and establishing transportation museums.— <http://www.nh.gov/dot/municipalhighways/tecmaq/index.htm>

**Safe Routes to School** is a 100% federally-funded program to support efforts to improve the safety of students walking and biking to school. In New Hampshire, this program is managed by the NH DOT. Funds may be used to construct pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure (such as sidewalks, marking bike lanes) along routes to schools serving grades K-8. John Corrigan, SRTS Coordinator, NHDOT, Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03301.

**Rural Development Administration** provides low interest loans and grants for municipal projects as well as financing for some private development.

**NH Division of Historic Resources** may be used as a source for historic property advice and expertise, any use of historic tax credits must be approved by this agency.

**NH Business Finance Authority** is a source for tax-exempt bonding and other subsidies for private and non-profit investment.

**NH Community Development Finance Authority** is a source for tax credits for publicly supported projects and Community Development Block Grant funds .

**NH Municipal Bond Bank** provides low interest funds for publicly bonded projects.

We also suggest the town consider enacting RSA 79-E, Community Revitalization Tax Incentives. Signed into law in 2006, this statute makes it possible for property owners wanting to substantially rehabilitate buildings in a downtown or village center to apply to the local governing body for a period of temporary tax relief.



## *And finally ....*

### Tools for Implementation

There is a wealth of sources of funding and expertise to explore. When applying for grants and foundation monies, many of the funders require plans or a detailed program to be in place as an assurance that projects will be completed in order to qualify for funds. This charrette plan is an important document that can be used to advance Chichester's plans and funding.

#### Expertise:

NH Office of Energy and Planning (OEP)  
NH Office of Travel & Tourism  
Division of Economic Development (within DRED)  
NH Department of Environmental Services (DES)  
NH Division of Historical Resources  
NH Council on the Arts  
U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)  
NH Preservation Alliance  
NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT)  
Central NH Regional Planning Commission  
USDA Rural Development

#### Funding

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)  
Economic Development Administration  
NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT)  
Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive (RSA 79-E)  
Conservation License Plate Funds  
Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP)  
Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA)  
Tax Increment Financing (TIF)  
Special Assessment Districts

