

Rochester Village Center Overlay District Development Modeling Study



Town of Rochester

Planning Board

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Introduction

This study models and visualizes Rochester village center infill that conforms both to the draft Village Center Overlay District (VCOD) bylaw and to the community's description of preferred development (*buildings like the original historic structures now in the Village, but closer together, containing small businesses and/or residences; additional building mass in the style of incremental additions; moderate setbacks with no parking in the setback; a village center that is easier to get around, but without sidewalks*). A visualization and site plan were created by inserting example buildings from around the region onto a suitable lot in Rochester. Since the VCOD bylaw as drafted does not correspond clearly to the desired development style, this study uses many assumptions.

Regional Design

Research into desirable village design in the region produced the following parameters for creating an example development. Site plans should be composed of residential-style buildings sited closer to the street, facing the street, with additional building space in incremental-looking “additions” or “accessory structures” (based on traditional guesthouses, stables, workshops, or similar outbuildings).

- Primary buildings:
 - 1.5 or 2.5 stories, pitched roof at regionally appropriate angles (e.g. 10/12 pitch)
 - 25'-40' façade width
 - 10'-20' front setback (note: there is typically an additional 10'-15' of right of way width between the paved road and the lot line)
 - Traditional architecture and materials
 - Primary buildings close enough together along the street frontage to foster walkability
- Secondary buildings and “additions”:
 - Behind the primary setback
 - Massing is broken up, especially when visible from the road
 - Appears clearly secondary to the main structure

Development Scenarios

The bylaw leads to four potential building scenarios for parcels in the village (in addition to the option of using only the underlying zoning), depending on (1) whether the VCOD bylaw's by-right or special permit guidelines are used, and (2) whether the proposed development is in the Agricultural-Residential zoning district or the Limited Commercial zoning district.

Model Site Plan 1 follows VCOD special permit requirements on a parcel in the Agricultural-Residential district and assumes a mix of commercial and residential uses as described in the bylaw objectives. The following additional assumptions are made to enable calculations of floor area, parking requirements, and other variables:

- All the buildings taken together contain an average of two usable stories
- 80% of the total built square footage on each floor is usable/leasable space
- Site plans contain a 75%/25% mix of residential/commercial space (the bylaw requires 25% minimum commercial space to allow multifamily buildings by special permit)
- Residential units are 1,500 square feet (sf) and 2BR each

Example buildings from around the region

Rochester, MA – “Gray house”



35' façade width. Main/attached buildings (35' x 35', 70' x 25') have a ~3,000 sf footprint. The barn is 30' x 20' with a 600 sf footprint.

A historic, residential primary structure addresses the street; additional massing is well broken up among additions and an accessory building. Mature high-branching shade trees help give the street a pleasant sense of enclosure.

Rochester, MA



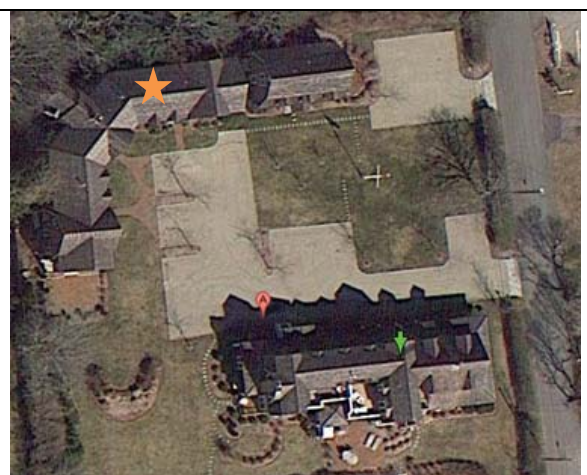
40' façade width
~3,000 sf footprint; 2,600 sf garage footprint

Fitzwilliam, NH – “Fitz 1”



35' façade width

Harwich Port, MA – “Harwich Port Secondary”



Main building: 40' façade width facing the street; 5,000 sf footprint

Secondary building: 25' wide; 4,500 sf footprint

Low visual impact gravel parking design with 18 spaces

Little Compton, RI



Rochester, MA - General store



~3,600 sf footprint

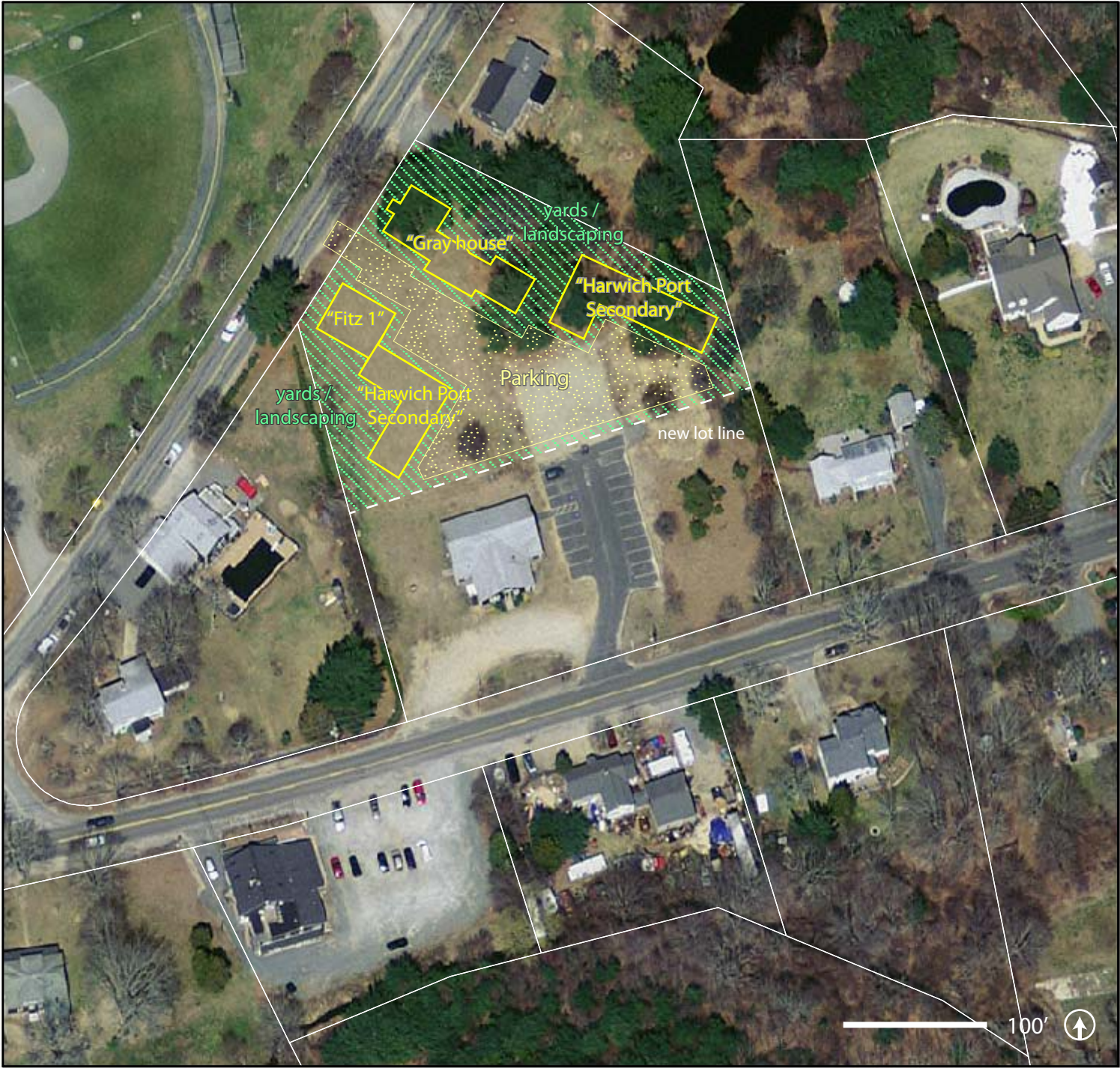
This lot is 27,317 sf and the building contained 3 businesses and 2 dwelling units.

Simsbury, CT – coffee shop in a former residential structure



35' façade width

2,500 sf footprint including covered porch; 2,100 sf actual footprint



Model Site Plan 1: VCOD development with special permit; back half of annex parcel

This model site plan is shown on a lot created from subdividing the Annex parcel into two lots of just over an acre each. The building footprints correspond to regional example buildings (see other sheet). Around 15,000 sf of parking area is shown.

Total building footprints	11250 sf
Average # stories	2
Total usable floor area assuming average # stories and 80% usable space	18000 sf

Residential usable space (3/4 of total)	# DUs @1500sf each	# Parking spaces @ 2.5 spaces per 2BR unit	Parking area @325 sf per space (includes alleys etc.)
13500	9	22.5	7312.5

Commercial usable space (1/4 of total)	Example # of retail spaces @ 1000sf each	# Parking spaces @ 1 per 250 sf commercial GFA	Parking area @325 sf per space
4500	4.5	22.5	7312.5

Total required parking spaces	Total required parking area
45	14625



Model Site Plan 1 Visualization

A view of the frontage on Mary's Pond Road

Issues/notes/questions regarding the bylaw¹

- One acre is a large minimum lot size for a village. The General Store site is 27,317 sf.
- The bylaw is unclear on number of buildings and uses allowed/encouraged per lot
- Is there any reason to differentiate between underlying Agricultural-Residential and Limited Commercial zoning in the VCOD? Why not allow the same uses?
- The bylaw doesn't seem to say much about street frontage, which hugely impacts the public character of the village area. Recommendations:
 - Require or encourage primary structures fairly close together for continuous frontage
 - Require trees along frontage
- Walking routes? An overall plan for a walkable village would support village-style development.
 - In the setback, or on the right of way?
 - If no sidewalks, then traffic calming via onstreet parking, buildings closer to street, other methods?
- Parking:
 - The parking requirements are huge. At the very least, allow reductions for mixed use since these spaces are typically used at different times.
 - Is on-street parking allowed on state-numbered highways and or on other roads? Need to find out.
 - Are gravel parking lots ok? They may match the village better than asphalt.
 - The bylaw requires visual separation (major landscaping, earthen berms, or grade changes) between parking "lots" and residential structures – even a few spaces by mixed use residential buildings? What about buildings like the general store, or the gray house? Does a lot need to be something distinct?
- What comprises "disturbed area"? Do the new trees (1 per 3 parking spaces) have to be near the parking spaces?
- The bylaw's objectives and the development style portrayed in this study relate to residential/commercial uses. For civic/institutional uses, other styles may be more appropriate. However, use of the underlying zoning for these could produce results (such as parking in the setback) that would compromise the quality of the village center.

Another note

A development site plan on the same newly created parcel using by-right instead of Special Permit VCOD provisions, assuming the most intensive mix of residential & commercial uses, would comprise:

- A single-family residence and optional accessory buildings (such as the gray house) containing one dwelling unit and one home business with one employee besides the occupant
- Five parking spaces
- A (minimum) one acre lot

Limited-Commercial zoned parcels were not explored in this study.

¹ In addition to questions submitted previously by Sandy Conaty.

Other reference images and notes

Fitzwilliam, NH

This area of Fitzwilliam has no sidewalks, but the streets are fairly pedestrian-friendly because of design factors including onstreet parking, facades and trees near the street, and lack of some centerlines.



Fitzwilliam, NH continued



Hancock, NH



Marion, MA

Marion has attractive “village commercial” style historic buildings. Unlike Rochester, the village area generally has sidewalks and zero setbacks.



Little Compton, RI

Little Compton has similar traffic calming factors to Fitzwilliam: onstreet parking, facades and trees near the street, lack of some centerlines, well placed stop signs.

