

The Built Environment: Blending Old and New



Maggie Stier, NH Preservation Alliance

Michael Behrendt, AICP, Chief Planner, City of Rochester

Americans sense that something is wrong with the places where we live and work...

We hear this unhappiness expressed in phrases like “no sense of place” and the “loss of community.”

We drive up and down the gruesome, tragic suburban boulevards of commerce and we're overwhelmed at the fantastic, awesome, stupefying ugliness of everything—the fry pits, the big box stores, the office units, the lube joints, the carpet warehouses, the parking lagoons, the jive plastic townhouse clusters, the uproar of signs, the highway itself clogged with cars—as though the whole thing had been designed by some diabolical force bent on making human being miserable.



James Kunstler, *The Geography of Nowhere*

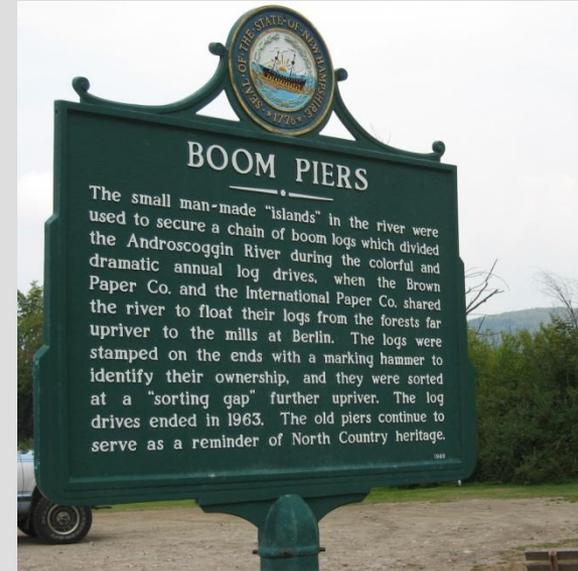
So...What do we do about it?

- ★ Notice what defines our communities; what is the role is of historic buildings, structures, sites, and objects?
- ★ Commit to identifying and locating these resources as an aid in good local and regional planning and decision-making
- ★ Consider that heritage tourism visitors spend more and stay longer



And then....

- ✦ Utilize appropriate tools for the situation and community goals
- ✦ Manage change by considering economic development and commercial growth in light of maintaining community character
- ✦ Promote and encouragement citizen awareness and engagement



Master Plan Chapter on Historic Resources

- ✦ Forms the basis for policies and ordinances to manage growth, development, and change
- ✦ Used as a means of integrating preservation into broader land use and planning efforts
- ✦ Can be done by citizens, local planners and/or heritage commission
- ✦ Consultant may be used to help with overview and town's important assets and contexts

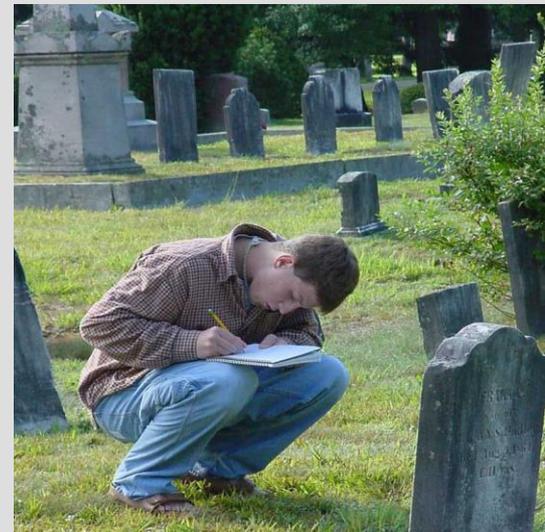


Heritage Commissions: start building awareness

- Advisory to town officials
- Not regulatory
- Engages citizens on behalf of community heritage
- May be involved in education, advocacy, even direct preservation projects



- Some towns combine Heritage Commissions with local Historic District Commissions
- They do not duplicate efforts of local historical societies, which are almost always private non-profits



Survey of Historic Resources

- ✦ **Survey:** the formal process of gathering information and identifying historic resources.
- ✦ Includes buildings and all visible aspects of the built environment—stone walls, dams, wells, orchards, cemeteries, etc.
- ✦ Process has four parts: establish purpose, conduct research, conduct fieldwork, compile written report.



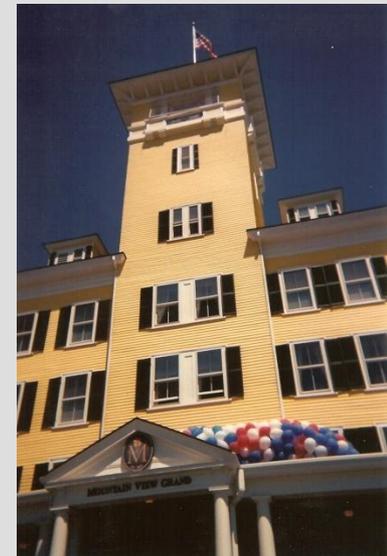
Certified Local Governments

- Have a designated partnership with the State Historic Preservation Office to protect their historic assets
- Are eligible for special grant funds for National-Register listed resources.



Designation as a historic resource is often required by funders

- Local survey or inventory work by a preservation professional determines eligibility—50 years old and integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.
- National Register of Historic Places listing may follow
- New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places also lists historic resources
- Some communities have local designation programs



Federal Historic Tax Credit

- Properties must be listed to or eligible for The National Register of Historic Places
- 20% tax credit for rehabilitation of income-producing properties
- Can be combined with other incentives and financing

<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/>



Downtown Tax Incentive RSA 79-e

- Enabling legislation in 14 NH towns
- For qualified projects in downtowns, village centers
- Allows for a finite period of time during which the property tax on the structure would not increase as a result of its substantial rehabilitation.
- In exchange, property owner grants a covenant ensuring there is a public benefit to the rehabilitation.
- Following expiration of the finite tax relief period, the structure would be taxed at its full market value taking into account the rehabilitation.



Saving Barns and Ag Structures

- Barn preservation tax incentives (RSA 79-D) encourage property owners to rehab their agricultural structures
- Grants a period of tax relief to offset investments in rehab
- Must carry public benefit

<http://www.nhpreservation.org>



Plan NH Charrettes

bring free expertise to a specific design or planning problem



www.plannh.org

Local Historic Districts

- Zoning: the most basic tool
- Some towns create a **Local Historic District** as zoning overlay so that certain properties are subject to review when changes might affect the overall character of the district



Historic Districts & Neighborhood Heritage Districts

- Usually an overlay to zoning
- Developed at local level for community needs
- What is reviewed can vary from only teardowns, major additions, and new construction to nearly all elements of a building, such as windows, doors, additions, porches, paint color, etc.



Design Review & Guidelines

- Town-wide process.
- Every property, every proposal is unique
- One particular architectural style is not preferred or expected
- Should be compatible with traditional NE architecture
- Chain stores must adapt to community character
- Building should possess overall integrity
- Should be harmonious with streetscape, context, and neighboring buildings
- Should blend with other features of the site
- Should articulate structure; no blank boxes

Design Review process

- May be mandatory or voluntary
- Recommendations made to Planning board
- Review Committee members need specialized skills
- Make it a positive, supportive, collaborative process
- Involves negotiation and flexibility



Design Review: Basic Principles

- Buildings relate to the street, either parallel or perpendicular
- Multiple stories
- Windows in front
- Pitched roofs, not flat (except on multi-story downtown buildings)
- Maintain rhythm of streetscape--setback, materials, massing, etc.



Caveats and Encouragements

- Be wary of “fake” historic character
- Base decisions on facts, not individual preference
- Take advantage of resources from National Park Service, National Trust for Historic Preservation, NH Division of Historical Resources, and NH Preservation Alliance

Demolition Review

- Demo Review ordinances give local governments time to consider alternatives to destruction of historic resources
- Usually period of 30 – 90 days for delay and discussion
- Cannot PREVENT demolition
- Often adopted in response to major loss



Demo Review Process

- Committee does site walk
- Considers history and significance of property
- May or may not involve review of building to take place of demolished structure
- Public hearing held to explore alternatives
- Issues determination



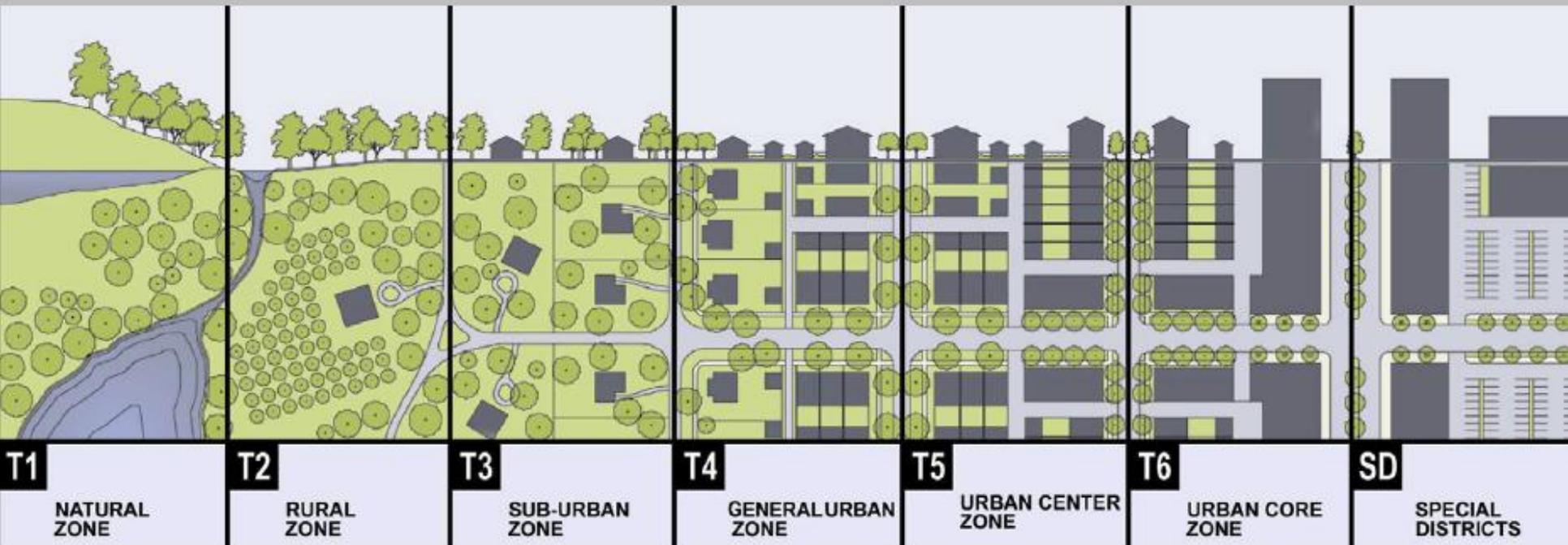
Different densities require different levels of consideration

Order of Sensitivity from Most to Least:

1. Downtowns
2. Existing Residential Neighborhoods
3. New Residential Neighborhoods
4. Rural settings
5. Intensive Commercial Corridors
6. Industrial-park settings



Transect



<Rural to Urban>

MORE OF THIS

- <less density – more density>
- <private realm – public realm>
- <residential use – mixed use>
- <small buildings – large buildings>
- <detached buildings – attached buildings>
- <articulated massing – simple massing>
- <wooden buildings – masonry buildings>
- <pitched roofs – flat roofs>
- <yards and porches – stoops and shopfronts>
- <deep setbacks – shallow setbacks>
- <rotated frontages – aligned frontages>
- <small yard signs – building mounted signage>
- <roads and lanes – streets and alleys>
- <high L.O.S. standards – low L.O.S. standards>
- <open swales – raised curbs>
- <narrow paths – wide sidewalks>
- <greenspace – hardscape>
- <parks and greens – squares and plazas>
- <deep buffers along rivers – formal riverwalks>
- <evening sky – bright lights>

MORE OF THIS

What else? type of drink, dog, music, sport, politics, hairstyle, CLOTHING...

NTHP economic planning model

- The National Trust Community Investment Corporation (“NTCIC”) uses the Preservation Economic Impact Model (“PEIM”), created by the Center for Urban Policy and Research at Rutgers University, to forecast the total economic effects of the rehabilitation of commercial historic buildings.
- Uses a multiplier methodology that calculates job creation, employee wages, and state and local tax benefits generated from a historic rehabilitation investment based on key project characteristics, such as location, total development cost, and type of real estate project (i.e., historic site, commercial property, and multifamily housing).
- Measures economic impacts up to construction completion but not after the building is placed in service.
- <http://ntcicfunds.com/services/preservation-economic-impact-model-2-0/>

Resources for More Information

- NH Division of Historical Resources 271-3483
www.nh.gov/nhdhr
- NH Preservation Alliance 224-2281
www.nhpreservation.org
- National Trust for Historic Preservation,
www.preservationnation.org
- National Park Service, www.nps.gov
- Partners for Sacred Places,
www.sacredplaces.org