

## OVERVIEW

York Village is extremely fortunate to have as one of its greatest assets, its village and architectural character. In fact it is recognized far and wide for its cultural and geographic-based heritage – an early New England coastal town. Maintaining and supporting this unique sense of place and heritage is a top priority for the Master Plan. The purpose of this chapter is to guide the Town in that direction.

This chapter addresses:

- 6.1 Village and Architectural Character
- 6.2 Maintain and Improve Existing Historic Buildings
- 6.3 Formalize Desired Village Character
- 6.4 Maintain and Foster Village and Architectural Character
- 6.5 Example Design Standard Topics
- 6.6 Example Design Standards
- 6.7 Recommended Steps to Develop Design Standards
- 6.8 Recommendations

The classic tri-part revitalization based approach is to:

1. Maintain and improve existing good buildings (see 6.2)
2. Assure that major renovations and new infill complement the best village and architectural character (see 6.3 & 6.4)
3. Assure a complementary interface between buildings (private realm) and more pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and roadways (public realm right-of-way) (see 6.3 & 6.4)

## 6.1 VILLAGE & ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

*(See Appendix - From Then to Now for additional information)*

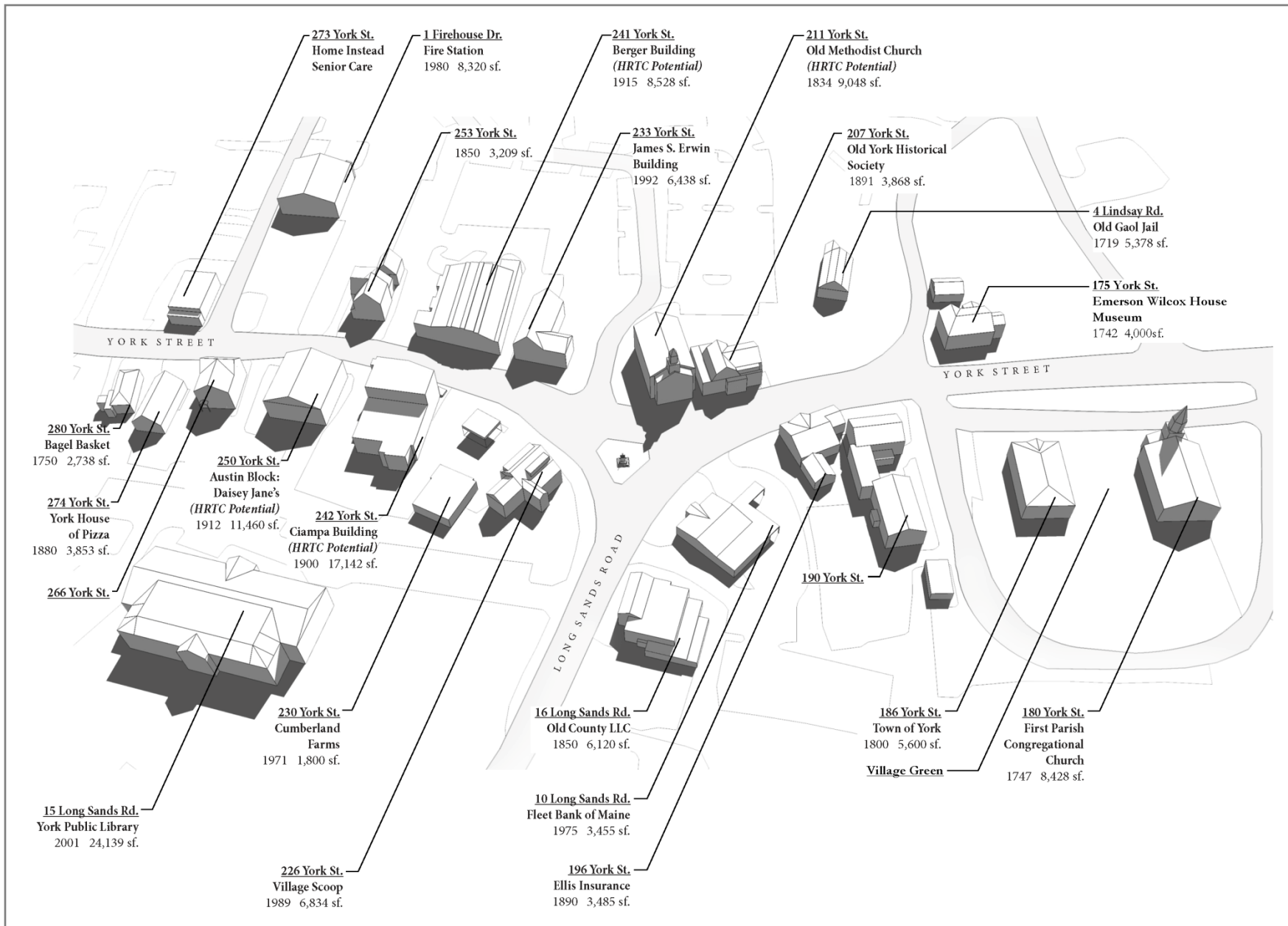
As a whole, the character of York Village is a surviving late 17th and 18th century town. However the core business district has gone through much change. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, York Street was without shade trees, the old cemetery was overgrown and the “village green” — the area surrounding Town Hall and the First Parish Church—was a sometimes muddy, always unkempt knoll.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, York's business district, along with the "monument square" at the intersection of York Street and Long Sands Road began to “modernize” and achieved much of the character we recognize today. Power lines and paved asphalt roads for automobiles impacted the historical nature of York Village. In mid-century, even further changes to “autoize” caused some older residences to be demolished (such as at the site of the Bank of America).

Despite the changes (some incremental and some drastic) York Village’s underlying patterns remain discernible. York Village’s primary character defining patterns are:

- **Main Street** - Buildings organized around a common commercial spine, such as York Street business area
- **Town Common** - Streets and buildings organized around a central public space, such as the Town Hall
- **Downtown** - A concentration of commercial buildings surrounded by residential neighborhoods, such as the Village Center and neighborhoods
- **Density** - Buildings clustered near buildings, leaving few un-built areas or open spaces
- **Scale** – Buildings typically 2 or 3 stories set the “village scale”
- **Street Edges** – Some buildings fronting and close to the street, such as the Ciampa and Berger buildings

The graphic below provides a visual overview of these top character defining patterns. It also illustrates how these patterns mutually benefit each other, and doing so create a web of overall character which forms York Village's distinct sense of place.



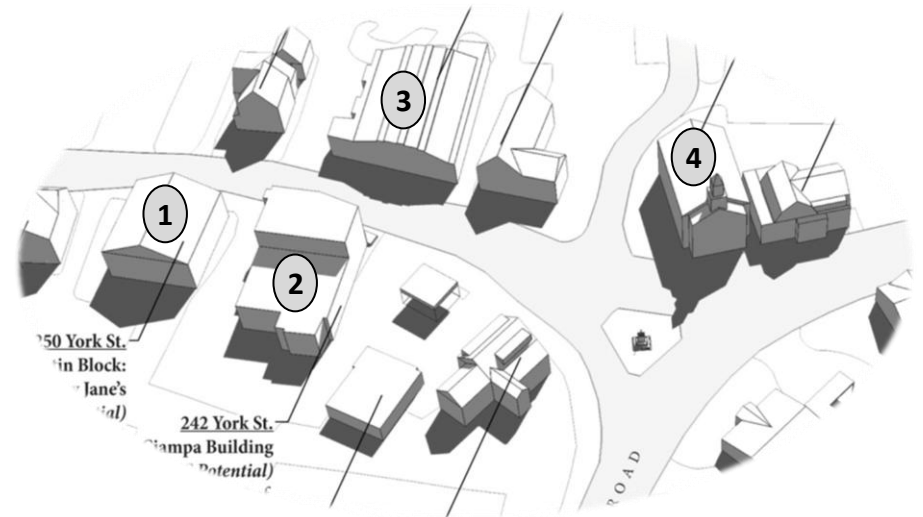
## 6.2 MAINTAIN & IMPROVE EXISTING HISTORIC BUILDINGS

**AS A PRIORITY** (see also *Economic Development, Chapter 7* and *Funding, Chapter 8*)

York Village’s architectural character is one of its greatest assets. At the same time, repair, maintenance, and improving historic buildings to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations for safety, function, efficiency, and convenience is expensive. Fortunately there are State and Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits (HRTCs) which are publicly-funded financial benefits that incentivize private property owners to invest in rehabilitation of certain historic structures, providing the structure is individually listed or a contributing building to a National Register (not local) Historic District. Under certain legal structures, private non-profit’s ownership can also be eligible. As a direct dollar for dollar credit, HRTCs are the most powerful tool for private-side investment in revitalization. The Maine HRTC is 25% of eligible rehabilitation expenses and the Federal HRTC is 20%. When both programs are utilized, the combined total is 45% of eligible rehabilitation expenses.

Within the National Register York Historic District and the Master Plan village core, several properties are both “contributing historic” and “commercial or income producing”. The following are **prominent examples** of properties potentially eligible to utilize these powerful financial incentives, and there may be others.

- 1) **250 York Street** houses Daisy Jane’s and Yoga on York.
- 2) **The York Realty Co. (Ciampa)** building at **240 York Street** houses the Village Art Gallery, Tayla Mac retail, Rick’s Restaurant, a Laundromat and apartments.
- 3) The former automobile dealership and garage (Berger) building **at 241 York Street** which houses the Fat Tomato Grill, York Flower Shop, a barber, a salon, and Berger’s Bike Shop.
- 4) The **Old Methodist Church** once was used as a retail outlet, is now vacant and is owned by York Hospital.



### **6.3 FORMALIZE DESIRED VILLAGE CHARACTER AS PART OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE FOR THE YORK VILLAGE ZONE**

The Town’s Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance should be revised to create a “York Village Zone” in order to promote the vitality and beauty of York Village as a dynamic, safe, and sustainable town center reflecting and preserving the history of a community that is both welcoming to visitors and supportive of local businesses.

At this point, many buildings in the Village would be non-conforming to standards fostering a vibrant town center. To correct this, the York Village Zone should establish new and more realistic criteria reflecting what exists and what the Town wants for its Village Center, including acceptable land uses and design standards as well as appropriate dimensions, density and building heights for that zone.

### **6.4 MAINTAIN AND FOSTER VILLAGE AND ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER USING BUILDING DESIGN STANDARDS**

Maintaining village and architectural character is primarily about character defining design principles rather than conforming to prescribed styles (physical form instead of use). Many communities, including York Beach, use Design Standards to articulate character defining design principles. For York Village, the primary purposes for Design Standards might be to:

- Maintain and improve existing good buildings
- Assure that major renovations and new infill complement the best village and architectural character
- Assure a complementary interface between the buildings (private realm) and pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and roadways (public realm).

***Design Standards are Qualitative and Flexible*** – Design standards are typically qualitative statements that address the desired character of development. Their qualitative nature is intended to provide flexibility in achieving design goals. Typically there are multiple ways to acceptably meet each standard, rather than any one specific design solution prescribed.

***Standards Must Be Primarily Visual*** – Village & Architectural Character is experienced visually and spatially. Since the vocabulary of space is graphics, rather than words, standards must be primarily described visually, such as with a diagram, a picture or a drawing, supported by text.

***Not All Standards Apply to All Proposals*** - Proposals vary in size, scale and complexity. Large proposals, such as a new multi-story building face different design considerations than smaller proposals, such as changing the sign system on a commercial storefront. Applicable design standards should be tailored to the size, scale, and complexity of the proposal as follows:

- Routine maintenance or repair is typically exempt
- Renovations or Additions provide an opportunity to bring non-conforming structures into greater conformity
- New principal building designs typically require a design sympathetic to the best architectural character, though not always. The design of a new building need not mimic existing buildings to be complementary.
- The Village Center Local Historic District has its own preservation standards which must be coordinated with appropriate York Village Design Standards.

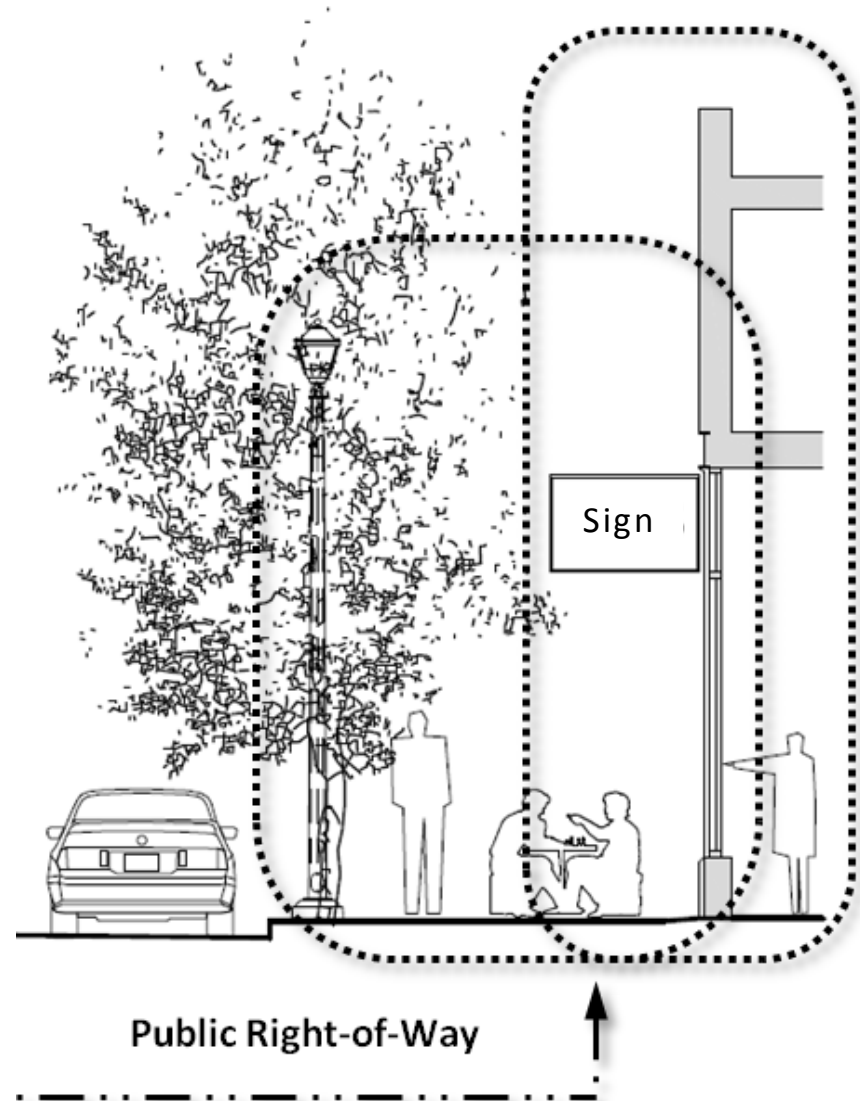
## 6.5 EXAMPLE DESIGN STANDARD TOPICS

Below is a list of topics typically addressed in Design Standards. These examples are excerpted from the York Beach Village Center Design Standards (by the York Beach Village Committee and Lachman Architects & Planners in 2010). Because they are only typical examples, some might be appropriate for York Village, others might not apply, and others might be added.

- **Building and Entrance Orientation** - Orientation to the sidewalk, building setbacks, facade offsets, multiple street frontage entrance locations, single street frontage entrance location, minimum number of stories, entrance door safety.
- **Buildings on Corner Lots** - Minimum number of stories, usable second floor space, entrance orientation.
- **Building Mass, Rhythm, & Scale** - Well-composed massing & scale.
- **Building Design** - New principal buildings, existing architectural features, exterior building materials, functional mechanicals, new accessory structures, trademark identities.
- **Facades** - Blank walls, design elements, first floor transparency, window size, trim, shutters, color, mixed-use buildings.
- **Roof Design** - Roof pitch, roof fronts, linear roofs, roof-mounted mechanicals, other roof design objectives.

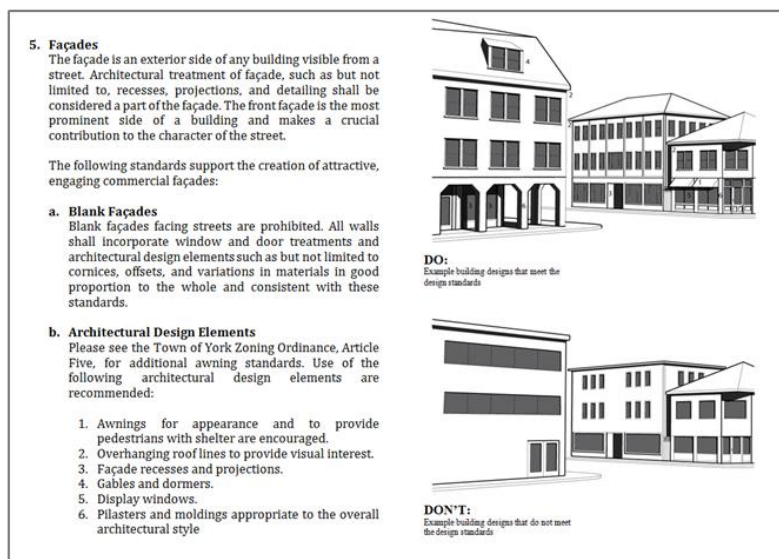
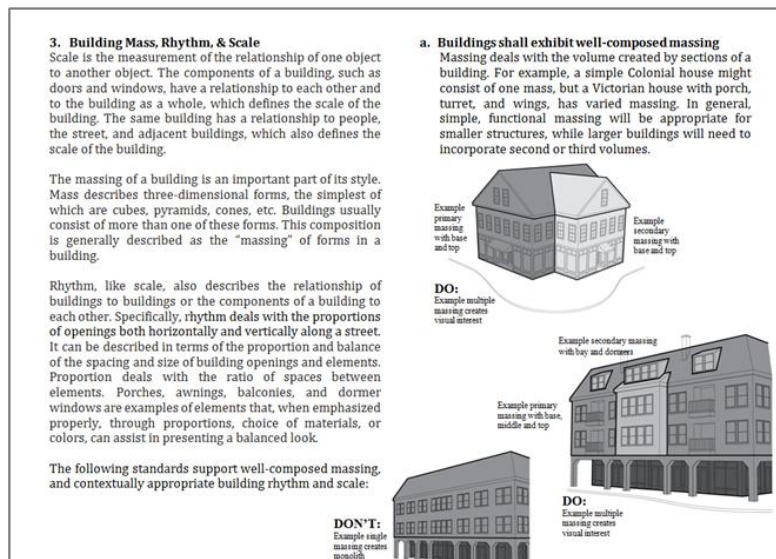
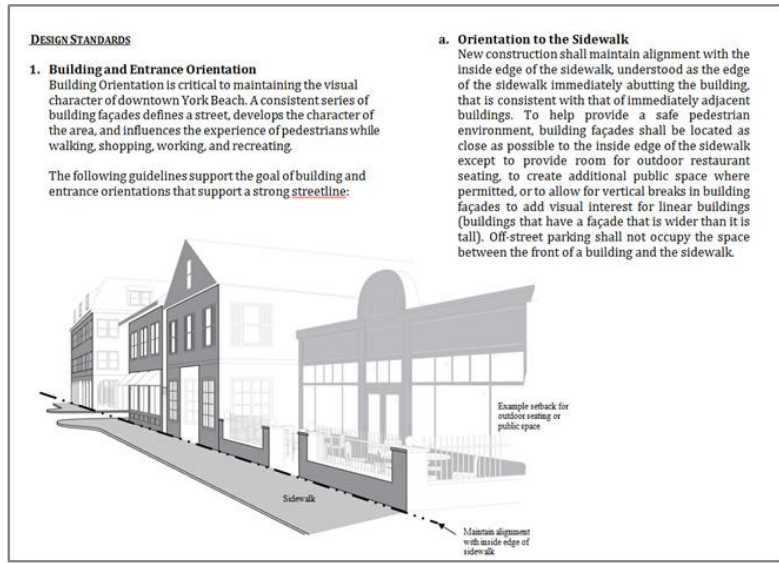
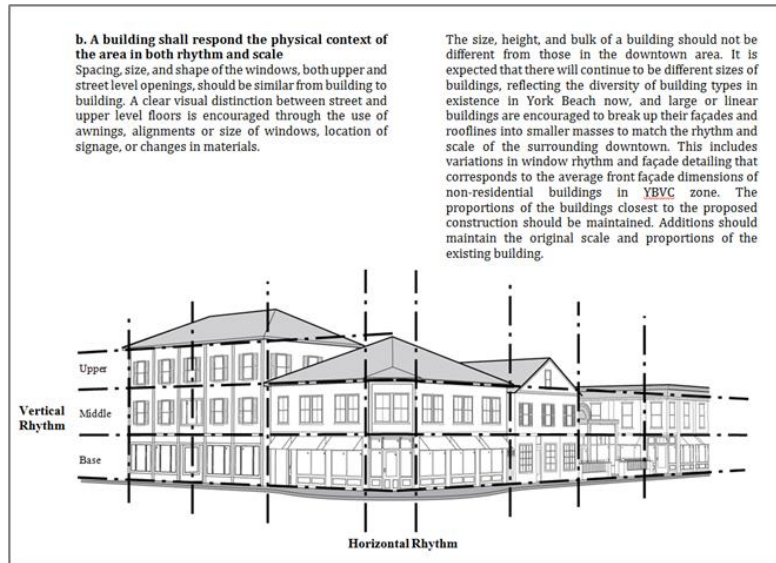
York Village is fortunate to have many locally-owned and operated businesses with deep commitments to the Town whose owners recognize that promoting attractive and appropriate design makes good business sense.

This example graphic illustrates where some different standards might apply, and how they might overlap and interface.



## 6.6 EXAMPLE DESIGN STANDARDS (produced by the York Beach Village Committee and Lachman Architects & Planners in 2010)

Each standard is typically illustrated showing one way the standard could be met, but not the only possible design solution. They are intended to stimulate options and provide direction for applicants. The illustrations are purposefully generic in scope, and are not intended to represent specific buildings. These standards provide a visual pattern book that illustrates written standards and guides development into the future.



## 6.7 RECOMMENDED STEPS TO DEVELOP DESIGN STANDARDS

Developing design standards is a deliberate public process that includes education, listening, outreach, feedback and above all – active community participation. Design standards can sometimes be controversial, so communication is as important as design. A lingering sour taste by stakeholders who feel not included or not heard can spoil the potential to implement well crafted standards. Participation fosters understanding and commitment.

Step 1 - Inventory and assess existing buildings within the Master Plan area and describe results in words, pictures and diagrams

Step 2- From the assessment; distill architectural character-defining principles unique to York Village

Step 3 - Conduct a Visual Preference Workshop - Explain the respective roles of the building and the right-of-way and how they interface for mutual benefit. Explain and seek input about York’s character-defining principles.

Step 4 - From the Visual Preference Workshop; distill a defining statement to describe the visual character consensus.

Step 5 – Using the consensus statement and design principles as the foundation, develop draft zoning and design standards that build upon it, and that are primarily visual.

Step 6 - Conduct a follow-up “Did We Hear You” Community Workshop to confirm the consensus statement and principles, and to confirm the zoning and design standards upon which they are based. Depending on complexity and controversy, more than one workshop may be required.

Step 7 – Formalize visual principles and draft the Zoning and Design Standards

## 6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Promote private investment incentives to maintain and improve existing historic buildings.**
- **Formalize desired village character as part of the Comprehensive Plan update for the York Village Zone**
- **Develop and utilize building design standards to maintain and foster village architectural character**
- **Follow recommended steps to develop design standards**