

LYNDEBOROUGH CENTER PRESERVATION ANALYSIS

A. INTRODUCTION



In October 2002, the Lyndeborough Planning Board requested the Nashua Regional Planning Commission to assist with developing a method to ensure the preservation of the unique character of Lyndeborough Center. Lyndeborough Center is composed of various historically significant structures, including the Old Town Hall (photo, left) and the Unitarian Church, and is located along Center Road near the intersection with New Road. The Planning Board is concerned with preserving the aesthetic and historic environment of this significant town center. Specific concerns include the location and type of structures that may be developed in the immediate vicinity. This report provides: 1) a visual analysis of the Center Road corridor in the area of Lyndeborough Center; 2)

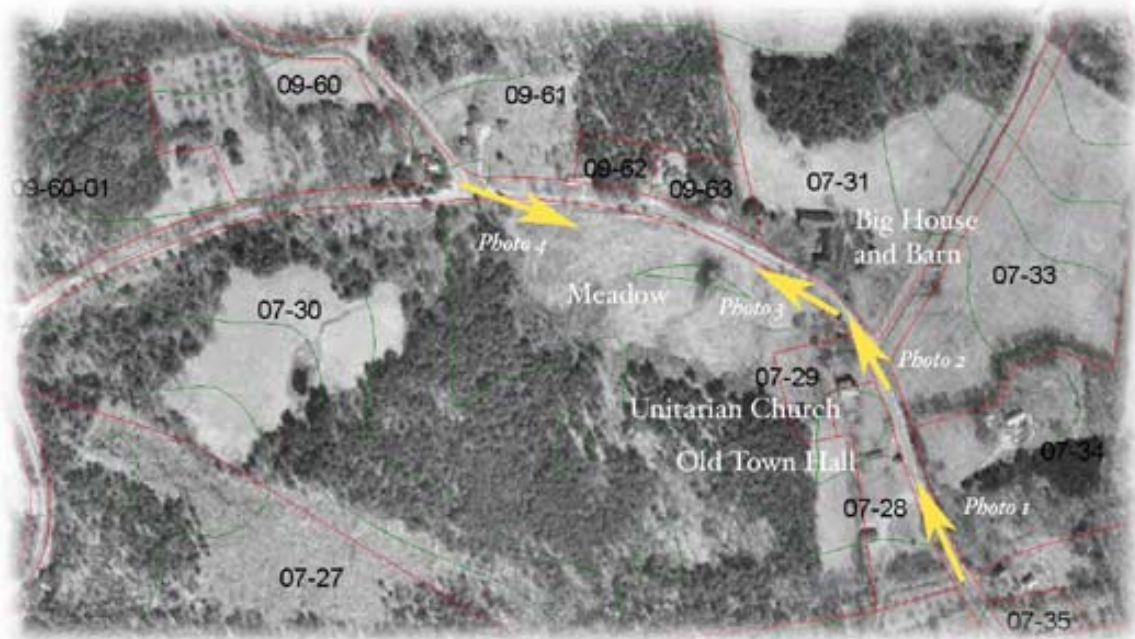
recommendations for appropriate site and architectural design; and 3) options to ensure the implementation of appropriate site and architectural design.

B. NEW ROAD CORRIDOR VISUAL ANALYSIS

The section of Center Road that traverses Lyndeborough Center presents the visitor with a picture postcard view of a traditional New England village setting. The corridor presents a unified visual experience despite variations in landscape, views and the size of man-made structures. Appendix A includes a location map and photographs that document the sequence of views from the roadway taken at 40 foot intervals, starting from the south at a point on Center Road where the Old Town Hall becomes visible.

Center Road is built on an elevated ridge and the topography slopes down gradually to both sides of the roadway. All of the lots along the corridor, with the exception of lots 07-30 and 07-33 are developed with residential or institutional uses. The pavement surface is twenty-three (23) feet wide with no shoulder. When not obstructed by forest or structures, various sections of the corridor offer expansive views north to Piscataquog Mountain. Views are punctuated by intermittent lines of trees and accented by stone walls on both sides. There are fourteen (14) structures along this stretch of corridor and, with four (4) exceptions, they are located close to the roadway. There are eight (8) residential structures, most of which exhibit a Federal or Georgian style. In addition, there is one large barn, three garages, the Old Town Hall and the church. There is also a stone animal pen between the Old Town Hall and the church. Another significant feature on the landscape is a large meadow to the north of the church on the south-west side of Center Road on lot 07-30. This open meadow provides expansive views from Center Road east towards the cluster of buildings that make up Lyndeborough Center, and south-west towards the forest that makes up most of lot 07-30. A summary of the visual analysis, from south to north, follows:

Figure 1. Aerial View of Lyndeborough Center



Note: Yellow arrows refer to photos below. Numbers refer to lot numbers.

Photo 1. Looking North from where the Old Town Hall becomes Visible



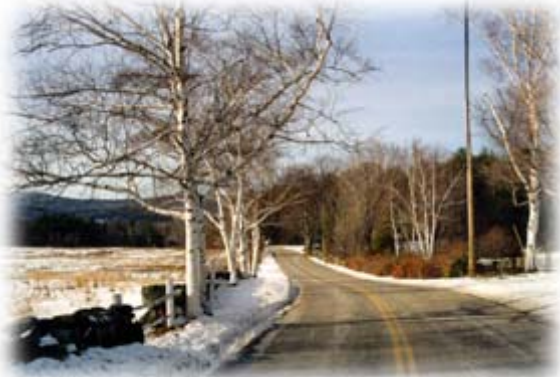
This photo is looking north from a point on Center Road where the Old Town Hall becomes visible. The roadway curves slightly to the right and ascends the hill. There is a low stone wall and overhead utility lines on the right side of the road. The view is enclosed to the east by a line of trees and is more open to the west where the visual “edge” of Lyndeborough Center (the three buildings that make up the “village”) is prevalent. The south sides of the Old Town Hall and the church are visible and piques the visitor’s interest.

Photo 2. Looking North from in front of the Unitarian Church



This photo is looking north from a point on Center Road in front of the church. The roadway curves slightly to the left and has crested the hill. New Road peels off to the right but is shielded by a row of trees. There is a low, partial stone wall and overhead utility lines on the right side of the road. The view to the right is expansive across the meadow of lot 07-33 towards Piscataquog Mountain. The view to the left is of the church and the Georgian style residence on lot 07-29. The view straight ahead is of the Federal style residence (the “big house”) and barn on lot 07-31. The narrow curving roadway, stone walls and the historic properties of the village indicates to the visitor that they are in a historically significant area.

Photo 3. Looking North-West from the corner of Center Road and New Road



This photo is looking north-west from the corner of Center Road and New Road. The roadway curves sharply to the left and begins a slight descent. There is a stone wall and a row of white birch trees on the left side of the road. The view to the right is of the big house and barn, and various types of trees and shrubs. The view to the left is across the meadow on lot 07-30. This view is dramatically terminated in the distance by a wall of trees. The view straight ahead is a long vista down the roadway.

Photo 4. Looking South-East from the corner of Center Road and Mountain Road



This photo is looking from the other direction, south-east from the corner of Center Road and New Road (at the end of the vista in photo 3). The roadway is ascending. There is a stone wall on the right side of the road. The view straight ahead and to the right is most dramatic and is across the meadow on lot 07-30 towards the visual edge of the cluster of structures that make up the village. There is a dramatic separation here between three major landscapes: 1) the meadow; 2) the forest; and 3) the village. The view to the left is of some of the historic structures located close to the roadway.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPROPRIATE DESIGN

1. Site Design

The most significant natural feature on the landscape is the meadow located on Lot 07-30 (photo 4, above). The meadow makes up approximately twenty percent (20%) of the fifty-six (56) acre Lot 07-30. This meadow, regardless of why it was cleared in the past, avails the visitor and local residents of a dramatic view from Mountain Road south-east towards the village. It is imperative that the meadow remain in its existing state when and if lot 07-30 is developed. Any structures located in the meadow, regardless of their architectural characteristics, would fragment the views from all directions and disrupt the visual edge that defines the village. A photo-simulation (right) illustrates this point.



This photo-simulation illustrates the effect of developing homes in the meadow on lot 07-30. The structures, regardless of their architectural style, interrupt the view towards the village.

The following site design criteria is recommended for development of lot 07-30:

- All structures should be located in the south part of the site and be buffered from Center Road by existing forest cover. There are two existing cleared areas within the interior of lot 07-30 that could accommodate house lots pending soils analysis. The developer should be encouraged to place a conservation easement over the entire meadow and over at least one hundred (100) feet of the adjacent forest buffer, less any access.
- Access to the interior of lot 07-30 should be limited to the existing driveway located just north-west of the intersection of Center Road and New Road. This driveway sits in a slight depression, is shielded from view along most sections of Center Road, and will not involve the removal of any section of stone wall. An alternative or secondary access could be from the intersection of Center Road and Mountain Road. There appears to be adequate site distance at this point and topography is manageable. Driveways should be shared among two or more residences and limited in width and pavement configuration to that of the surrounding road network. Any utilities placed along the driveway bisecting the meadow should be placed underground for the depth of the meadow.
- Given the historic significance of Lyndeborough Center, any development application for lot 07-30 could be reviewed by the Nashua Regional Planning Commission at the Planning Board's request.



Another significant feature on the landscape is the view from Center Road north-east across the meadow of lot 07-33 towards Piscataquog Mountain (photo, right). This view contributes significantly to the character of Lyndeborough Center and should be preserved if possible if and when lot 07-33 is developed. Given the open nature of lot 07-33, the development of structures will be visible from Center Road when travelling south and possibly when traveling north depending on where they are located. The following site design criteria is recommended for development of lot 07-33:

- All structures should be located in the north and/or eastern part of the site as they will be shielded from Center Road by the row of trees located along the southern boundary of the lot. In addition, views from Center Road towards Piscataquog Mountain will be preserved.
- Access to lot 297 should be from New Road, preferably as far from the intersection of Center Road and New Road as possible. This will allow for adequate site distance and eliminate the removal of a section of stone wall and foliage in front of the village.

2. Architectural Design



The architectural design of most of the various buildings in and around Lyndeborough Center exhibit either a Georgian (1700-1780) or Federalist (1780-1830) style. The first real architectural style to appear in provincial America, the Georgian style is embellished by ornament inspired by Italian Renaissance and English sources. The style is characterized by classical moldings, both inside and out, symmetrical facades, window caps, sliding window sashes and more elaborate doorways. Most often the Georgian house measures 2½ stories with five individual windows across the front and two windows deep on the side. The roof can be either a gable or a hip (four slopes meeting at the ridge). The sliding sash windows may have anywhere from six to twelve panes of glass in each sash (see photo, left). In Lyndeborough Center, the Georgian structures have white clapboard siding, in some cases hand drawn.

The Federal style is in many ways a refinement of the preceding Georgian style, with somewhat lighter, more delicate ornament which often incorporates elliptical and semicircular fanlight shapes. Like the Georgian, the Federal style building almost always displays a five bay, symmetrical facade. The most common Federal house type is the two story dwelling with hip or gable roof. The hallmark of the style is the fanlight or fan over the doorway with partial sidelights flanking the door. In Lyndeborough Center, the Federalist structures also have white clapboard siding.



The house on lot 07-29 is of Georgian Style with the garage behind the main building. The main building is one and a half stories and approximately twice as wide as it is deep. Floor area of the main building is approximately 2,000 ft².



The house on lot 09-61 is of Federalist Style with the garage and addition behind the main building. The main building is two stories and approximately twice as wide as it is deep. Floor area of the main building is approximately 2,500 ft².

Regardless of style or overall size, the massing of the historic structures in Lyndeborough is similar. The main buildings are generally twice as wide as they are deep and are rectangular and symmetrical. Additions to the main buildings are constructed of similar materials, but are not generally symmetrical. The following architectural design criteria is recommended for new structures in the Lyndeborough Center area:

- New structures should incorporate elements of the Georgian or Federalist architectural style. Elements may include: five-bay symmetrical façade; white clapboard siding; sash windows with caps; central or dual red brick chimneys; gable or hipped roofs; and/or classical moldings.
- Garages should be accessory to the main building, reflect or complement the main building's architectural style, and be located to the rear. Garages designed to represent barns are encouraged. Driveways should be located to the side of the main structure and not in the front yard.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

There are three possible methods to implement the above design recommendations. These include: 1) voluntary design guidance; 2) zoning overlay district; 3) Historic District designation.

1. Voluntary Design Guidance.



Voluntary design guidance, although not enforceable, can be a powerful tool to bring issues of concern to the forefront during the development review process. The Planning Board could include discussion of the design guidance in the preliminary conceptual consultation and design review phases of the subdivision review process, as recommended in section 310.00 of the Lyndeborough Subdivision Regulations. The RSA's do not, however, authorize the Town to *require* the conceptual consultation and design review phases and it will be up to the developer to participate. Design guidance can

be easily drafted from the site design and architectural design recommendations in this report.

2. Zoning Overlay District

A "Lyndeborough Center" Zoning Overlay District, which is fully enforceable, can be adopted by the Town at Town Meeting. The Zoning Overlay District can be applied to either 1,400 feet on either side of Center Road for the length of Center Road within view of the village, or to specific lots within this area. In the case of Lyndeborough Center, the zoning overlay district could impose additional design criteria over and above that of the underlying zoning district. This design criteria could be designed to preserve the meadow on lot 07-30 and the view across lot 07-33, if the parcels are subdivided. The zoning overlay district would have no bearing on the construction of a single residential structure where no subdivision is involved. Sample language may be drafted for Town Meeting. The ability of such a zoning overlay district to regulate architectural characteristics, however, is debatable and should be investigated by the Town's Attorney.

3. Cluster Development Ordinance

A "cluster development" ordinance, as authorized by RSA 674:21.I.(f), which is fully enforceable, can be adopted by the Town at Town Meeting. The cluster development ordinance could be applied to the RL-1 Zoning District and regulate the subdivision of parcels greater than, say, 20 acres. Such an ordinance requires that a certain percentage of a parcel to be subdivided must remain undeveloped and protected with a conservation easement or transferred to the Town. The overall density for a "conservation subdivision" is the same as for a conventional subdivision, but the lots are generally smaller to compensate for the large area of open space. The Planning Board would then have the authority to influence where the conservation easement would apply. In the case of Lyndeborough Center, the easement could be applied to the meadows. The ability of such an ordinance to regulate architectural characteristics, however, is debatable and should be investigated by the Town's Attorney.

4. Historic District Designation

Per RSA 674:46, the Town has the authority, by ordinance, to establish, change, lay out and define a historic district. Within the district, the Town is empowered to regulate the construction, alteration, repair, moving, demolition or use of such structures and places. A Historic District Commission must be formed and is responsible for adopting, amending and administering regulations to be applied to the historic district. The Selectmen would be responsible for enforcing the ordinance. In order to be useful,

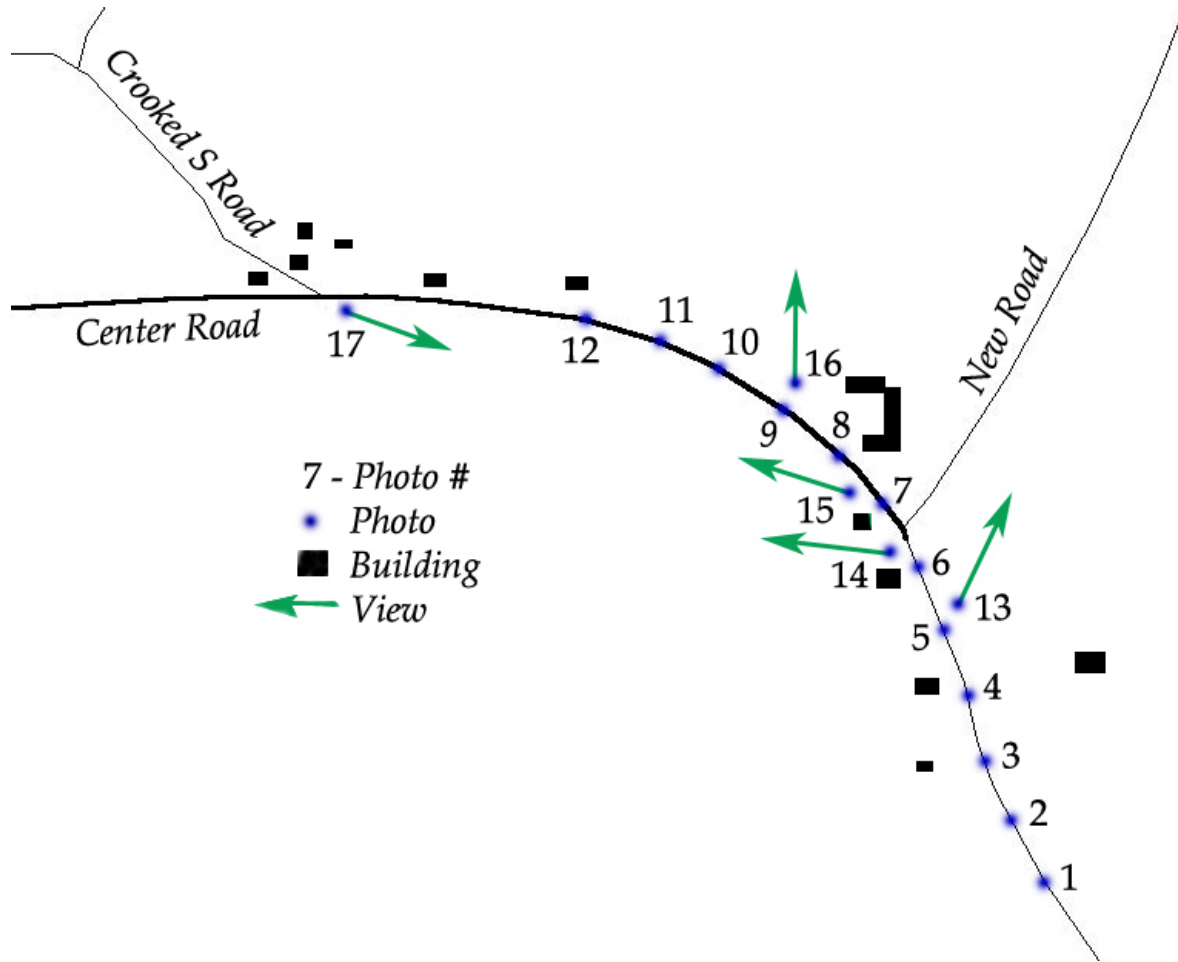
the historic district would have to include all the lots within view of the village and be established prior to any development application submittal. The benefits include much greater power to regulate architectural treatment but will involve the commitment of dedicated volunteers. A further designation for consideration is to list various structures, or the entire village in the State and/or National Register of Historic Places. However, this does not provide additional protection.

5. Scenic Road Designation

RSA 231:157 and 158 authorizes the Town to designate a road other than a state highway as a "Scenic Road." The designation may be approved at any annual or special Town Meeting. This law protects such roads from repair or maintenance which would involve the disturbance of stone walls and medium and large-sized trees within the right of way, except with the written consent of an official body. The Town may, as part of a scenic road designation, impose provisions with respect to such road which are different from or in addition to those set forth in the RSA. The Town may consider adopting the stretch of Center Road from Mountain Road to New Road as a Scenic Road.

Some communities have stricter setback standards for property fronting a scenic road. For example, the Hollis Zoning Ordinance requires a 100 foot front setback from a scenic road, which is 50 feet greater than for an undesignated road. However, the required front setback would have to be 1,400 feet to be effective along Center Road in Lyndeborough. A required front setback of such depth would create a significant number of non-conforming properties along Center Road and other scenic roads and therefore is not recommended.

APPENDIX A Viewshed Analysis



Note: Blue dots and green arrows correspond with photos below



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7



Photo 8



Photo 9



Photo 10



Photo 11



Photo 12



Photo 13



Photo 14



Photo 15



Photo 16



Photo 17

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