

Chester Unified Development Bylaws - Bylaw Modernization Project

Scope of Work/Approach

Generalized Timeline

April 2022 – Project Begins

May 16, 2022 – Kick Off Meeting – review and adjust project approach, scope, and timeline

June-Sept 2022 – Hold 4 workshops over next 4 months, once each month

May 2022 – Sept. 2023 – Prepare draft bylaw amendments, one section at a time

October 2023 – Draft bylaw (all sections) completed

January 31, 2024 – Final bylaw adoption (all sections), grant completion

Incremental Adoption Approach

Updates to the bylaws will be developed and adopted incrementally.

The PC may want to approve as many as six sections of the bylaw update and submit each one successively for adoption by the Selectboard. A step-by-step process seems to be easier for people to get their arms around and come to agreement. It also avoids putting a long, year-and-a-half of effort into a mega document that gets shot down.

The Selectboard is now considering the new Village Green district for adoption. Next is likely to be the Legacy Use and Adaptive Reuse amendments. After that you may want to focus on updates to the General Use Standards and Development Review Procedures sections. After that, perhaps revising and adopting a Village Center District, then a Mixed-Use District (eliminating the current Residential-Commercial), then a General Business District (eliminating the current Commercial-Industrial), then the Residential Districts, and finally the Conservation Districts.

(One of the things we will do as part of Workshop #1 is to compare the Town Plan maps with the Zoning District Maps, which may result in changes as discussed above.)

Task 1 – Education and Outreach

Each workshop would be about 1 ½ hours in length. Educational presentations for Workshops 1 and 2 would strive to be about 30 minutes, leaving the rest of the time for discussion. The main purpose of the workshops is to review information from existing sources and experts in their fields, with a primary focus on housing, and then identify principles to guide the bylaw update process. Written summaries of each workshop outcomes will be provided.

Everyone is busy and short staffed. You may want to consider interviews or another method if we find it is difficult to get speakers/panelists for Workshops 3 and 4.

A key question is how to schedule these workshops. One option is to have one a month, while still working on zoning updates at the same time.

Workshop #1 to review Town Plan housing goals and implementation steps in the Main Street Master Plan, as well as guidance from Zoning for Great Neighborhoods, Fair Housing Law, smart growth principles, etc.

Workshop #2 review the results of the Keys to the Valley project and evaluate data and recommendations specific to Chester

Workshop #3 with Windham and Windsor Housing Trust – housing needs, regulatory barriers, etc.

Workshop #4 with realtors and builders – housing needs, regulatory barriers, etc.

Task 2 – Modernize Unified Development Bylaws (UDBs)

Refine Chester’s UDBs to modernize the standards and review processes to further community housing goals and village revitalization strategies, working on one district or section at a time. As noted above, perhaps we start with General Use Standards and Development Review Procedures sections. Then, given the funding source (i.e. for housing in walkable neighborhoods), I suggest looking at the Village Center District and working our way outward from the center.

This effort includes the following subtasks:

- a. Review drafts at monthly Planning Commission meetings
- b. Conduct outreach to affected neighborhoods

What is the best way to do this? *We can try a number of things, such as posting drafts on a website, flyers around town, information in Chester Telegraph, use Front Porch Forum, direct messaging/mail, neighborhood meetings or other ideas folks may have. It can be as simple as inviting the neighborhood to a PC meeting to discuss changes in each district as we get to each one. This may be more effective than big workshops.*

- c. Prepare final draft
- d. Review final draft at public informational meeting
- e. Assist Town in achieving final adoption by grant closeout

Deliverables

1. Facilitate a kick off meeting
2. Public Outreach and written summaries of outreach findings

3. Attendance at regular monthly Planning Commission meetings
4. Facilitate public meeting to review a draft Unified Development Bylaw
5. Prepare a final draft Unified Development Bylaw with the Planning Commission, and develop the necessary documentation for the local adoption process
6. Work with Planning Commission and Selectboard in achieving final adoption by grant closeout.