



15 QUEEN STREET INITIATIVE

MAY 2021



NEXTGEN

Prepared for:

Cookstown Community Development Group, ACO Next Gen

Prepared by:

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Acknowledgements:

Special thanks to Irene Galea, Louisa Simmons and the ACO NextGen Exec Team for organizing this initiative, and to Deb Crawford and CCDT for including ACO NextGen in the attempt to save a piece of Cookstown's heritage.

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THE TEAM

FAIZAAN KHAN

Faizaan cares deeply about all facets of city building and sees heritage conservation as an integral and powerful city building tool. His passion for built heritage stems from his desire to actively work against contemporary conservation paradigms that are entrenched in colonization, whiteness, and capital. He specialised in the technology of architecture, landscape, and urbanism at the University of Toronto, and currently works as a Project Coordinator on the Future City Builders Program at Evergreen Canada.

MACKENZIE CRUMB

Mackenzie's interest and increasing love of heritage began when her existing fondness of the City of Hamilton met a Public History course at McMaster University. As a history enthusiast, she loves how heritage allows her to physically work with history in the real world. She has a BA in History and French from McMaster University, and is currently studying Urban and Regional Planning and GIS at Mohawk College.

EVAN KARL

After completing a double major in Biomedical Science and German, Evan spent 3 years at the Willowbank School in Queenston, ON, studying heritage conservation. During his time there, he learned the ins-and-outs of the trades, legislation, and philosophy, that enable and drive heritage conservation in Canada. Evan is not satisfied with a specialization and attempts to bridge the void between the trade and academic sides of heritage; he is happiest when the buckets and dust meet the budgets and drafting tables. Evan currently works on the Province House conservation project in Charlottetown, PE.

PROJECT SUMMARY

It was an icon of the commercial artery. It heralded the dawn of a prosperous era and serviced the needs of a growing community. It guarded that same community from an omnipresent threat. It offered a starting block for many who came to call Cookstown home. Now, it sits empty and unfulfilled, its service to the community unrecognized, its potential unrealized, and its beauty masked.

15 Queen St., in the village of Cookstown, is a commercial building that dates back to the 19th century. After almost 150 years of operation, the property was purchased by the Cortel Group. The building has since been suffering from demolition by neglect.

A concerned local community group, the Cookstown Community Development Team (CCDT), asked for volunteers from the ACO NextGen to conduct a study of the building and propose a design for its redevelopment in the hope it may inspire action to save the property.

This brief report is the culmination of our team's endeavour to understand the building through its historic and modern contexts. This involved research into its former appearance and role within the community as well as the current planning regulations that guide its future incarnation and function. All findings were then used to create an informed and considerate design for the site's hopeful conservation and reuse.

PROJECT DATA

ADDRESS	15-17 Queen Street
LOCATION	Cookstown, Ontario
OWNER	Cortel Group
ZONING DISTRICT	MU5 (Mixed Use 5)
DESIGNATION	OHA - Part V - Class D (Non-Contributing)
LOT AREA	2,166 metres squared



Fig. 1

HERITAGE IMPACT

HISTORY & CONTEXT

There are only a few historic photos showing the building at 15 Queen St. prior to its mid-century makeover, all of which are taken from a similar vantage point on Queen St. capturing a sliver of the western wall and the north-facing storefronts. Despite this narrow perspective, we were able to develop a firm profile of the property's historic exterior. Our final interpretation was limited by the age of the photographs, which all dated from the early 20th century. Complementing the photographs, however, was a fire insurance map of Cookstown, drafted by the Charles E. Goad Company in 1885. Together, they illuminated the architectural and contextual history of the old duplex.

The original architectural style of 15 Queen St. falls under the general category of Italianate, which was a common style for both residential and commercial buildings in Canada during the latter half of the 19th century. Many motifs and details are attributed to this style but their inclusion in the final product was often dictated by the owner's budget and taste. As such, the property at 15 Queen St. strongly reflects its provincial milieu in that it exhibits little decoration. The only flourish on the building is the dichromatic brickwork that is used to highlight typical Italianate elements: Roman-arched windows and quoined corners. One notable feature in the historic photographs is the obvious reversal of the colour on the main façade's second storey. It was impossible to discern from the photograph how exactly this was achieved (e.g. limewash, harling, buff bricks, paint), but the effect is the illusion of a smooth stuccoed façade, which strongly reinforces the building's Italianate classification.

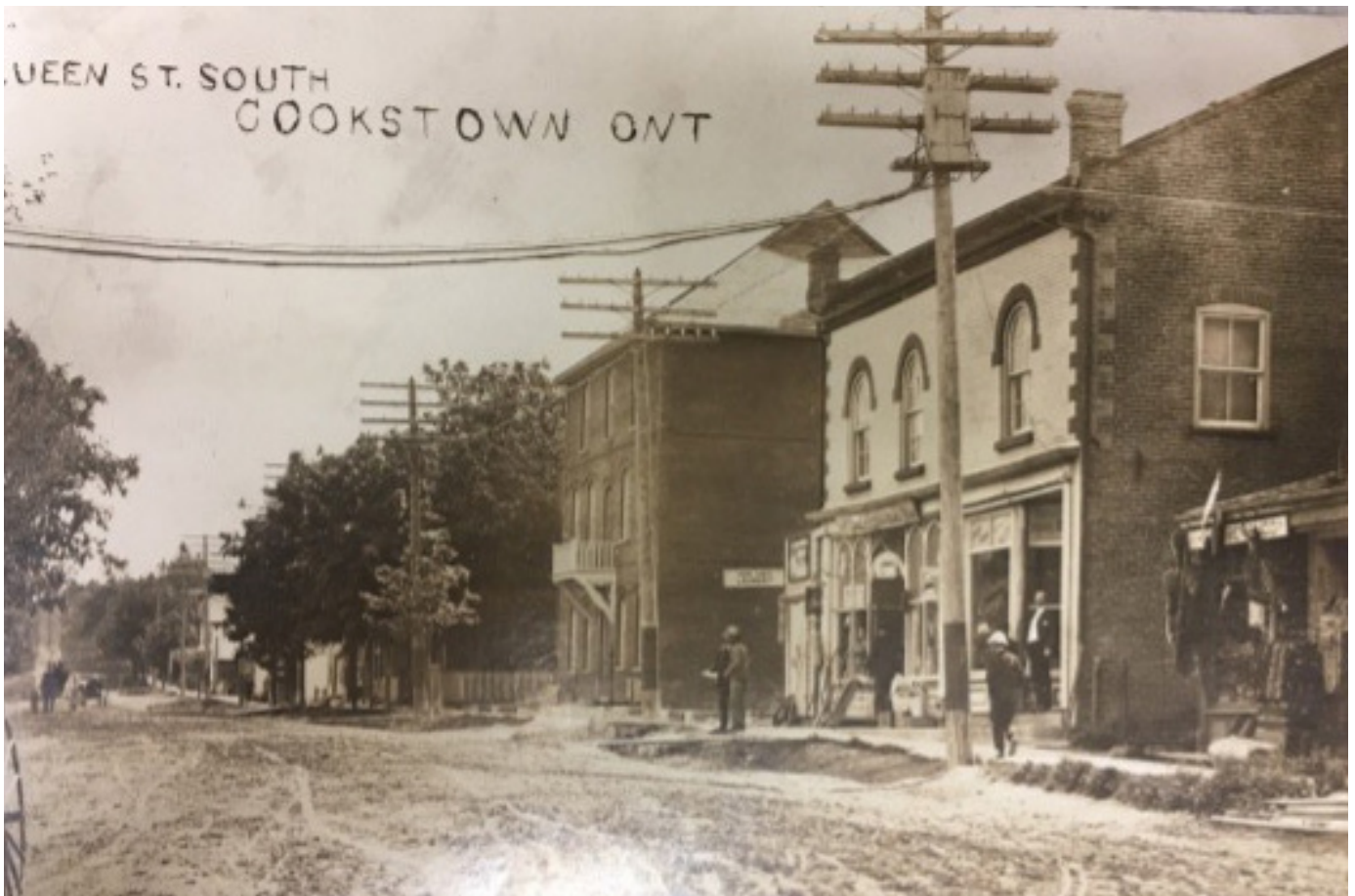


Fig. 2. 15 Queen St. ca. 1910s



Fig. 3. 10 Queen St. ca. 2021



Fig. 4. 9 Queen St. ca. 2021

TIMELINE

Ca. 1820
Simcoe county is surveyed and opened to European settlers.

Ca. 1825
Cookstown is first settled by Europeans, mainly of Scottish and Irish descent.

1863
Wm. Montgomery purchases the 1/5 acre lot in the village.

1945
Mr. & Mrs. Neilly purchase the building.

1959
Extensive renovations give the building a modern façade and combine the interior space

2017
The Cortel group purchases the building.

2021
ACO NextGen Project

Ab immemorabili – 1650
This area is known as Huronia and is the traditional land of the Wendat peoples.

Ca. 1818
Treaty 18 sees transfer of land by signatories of the Chippewa nation to the British Crown for 1200 yearly in perpetuity “in goods at the Montreal price.”

1847
Cookstown is first used as the settlement's name (formerly Perry's Corners).

1865
Henry Harper buys part of this lot from Wm. Montgomery for \$200.

1953
Small building on the adjacent lot, known colloquially as “the log cabin”, is built by Norman Broley.

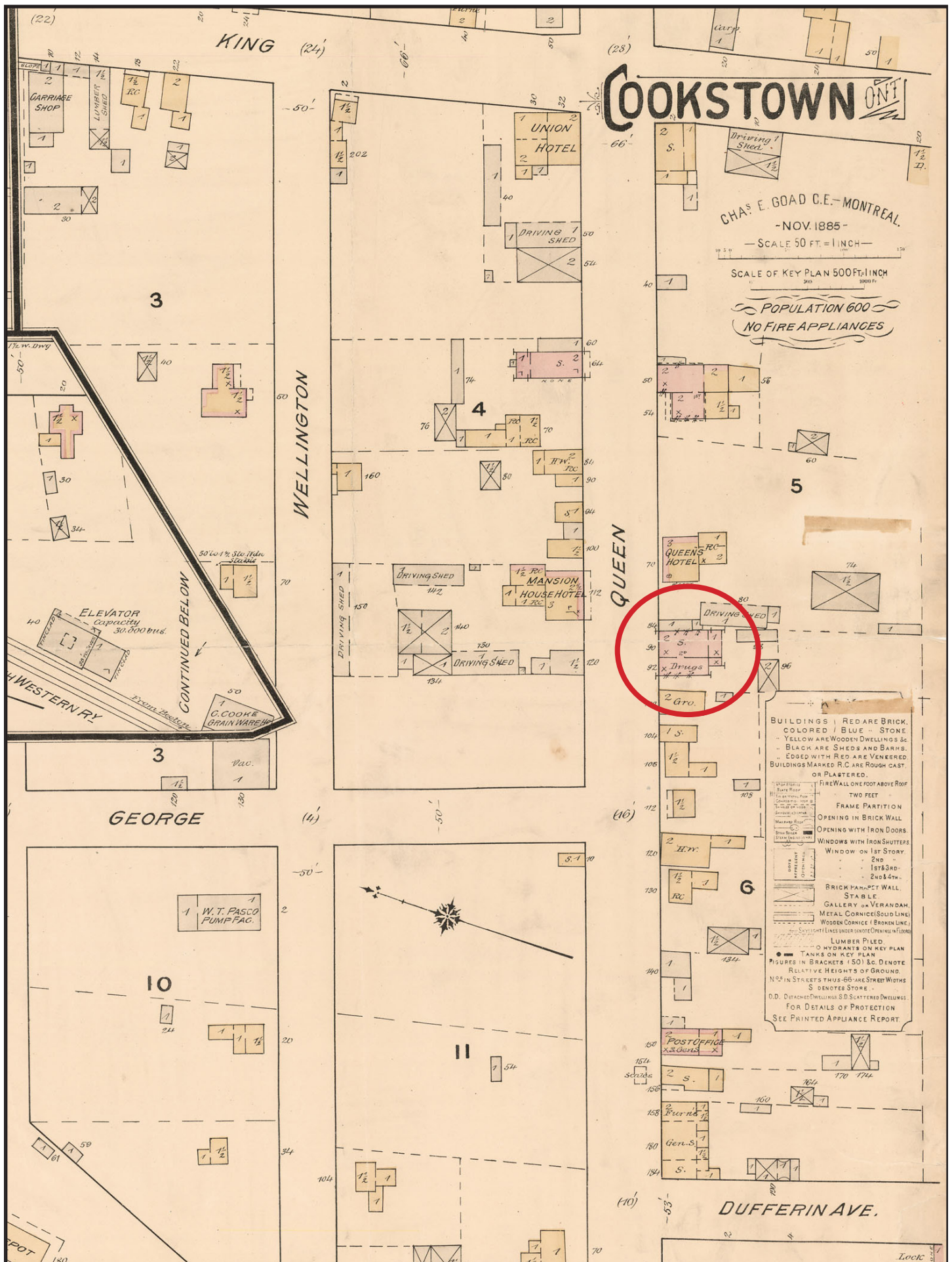
1962
Cookstown is incorporated as a village.

2018
The tenants leases are not renewed and the building becomes vacant.

Another notable feature of the property is its gable-end walls that extend beyond the roofline. While not a common element of the Italianate style, the design of these walls offered a hint of the building's original context within the village. Extended walls were historically built for fire retardation purposes and were of such import that contemporaneous fire insurance maps indicated whether or not they were present. This was the case for the 1885 Goad map of Cookstown (see Fig. 2). The map shows the large brick duplex in the centre of the village, surrounded by smaller wooden structures. In this 19th century environment, it was critical to introduce more fire-resistant buildings. Therefore, the building's materials and overall design indicate both sizeable investment and precautionary due diligence. According to the fire insurance map, the duplex at 15 Queen St. is one of only 3 buildings of a purely masonry construction in the entire village by November 1885 – which made it one of the most permanent, and safest in Cookstown. While the modern threat of conflagration may be much diminished, the raised gable-end walls of 15 Queen St. remain as a symbol of enduring respect for the flames.

The duplex's Italianate detailing and safety-conscious design, while significantly contributing to its own initial function and appearance, have additional value because of the link they offer to other buildings in Cookstown. Further east at 9 and 10 Queen St. (see fig. 2) (important Class B and Class A buildings in the HCD respectively), there are additional examples of Italianate buildings that, like the duplex, feature elements such as quoins and arched windows, accented with buff brick. The similarities between 10 and 15 Queen St., however, do not stop at general architectural details. Both buildings share a striking resemblance in their overall design, including their elevated gable end walls, number of chimneys, bond pattern, and single-storey lean-to rooms at the rear. Even the current store front of number 10 seems to be a direct transplant of the eastern storefront seen in historic photos of 15 Queen St. These commonalities strongly suggest a link between the buildings and could be the legacy of a local builder: further research is needed. At the very least they indicate that the underappreciated duplex belongs to the precedent that shapes the streetscape of the Cookstown HCD.

Finally, it is the building's actual location in the village that also contributes to its significance. When first constructed, 15 Queen St. was located in the middle of Cookstown's fledgling commercial corridor and was one of, if not the largest, and most solid commercial structures the rural community had ever seen. While the village has expanded and changed around it, 15 Queen St. has stood resolutely at its heart - its prime location likely a key contributor to its longevity and adaptability. From a mercantile perspective, the old duplex can be seen as one of the earliest, significant and most continuously present commercial features of Cookstown.



10 Fig. 5. Fire Insurance Map of Cookstown, 1885

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Our primary planning considerations involved the property's zoning designation, the building's heritage classification, and the goals of both the town of Innisfil and the Cookstown Heritage Conservation District.

ZONING

The property is currently zoned as MU5, or Mixed Use, which requires buildings to provide a mix of residential, commercial and institutional. We decided to keep this designation in our plans and create a design that could be used by both residents, commercial tenants, and visitors to the downtown area. The main floor of the original building would be kept as commercial space, as it has been used since its inception, where a wide range of commercial uses are permitted in this zone.

The upper floor would remain residential, as it has up until 2017, with two available apartment units. For a higher income stream, we wanted to make room for more residential units in the form of an addition on the back of the building in such a way that neither the building's character nor the streetscape would be disturbed. The addition would contain eight units, and would be limited by the zoning height restriction of 10.5 metres.

Other zoning considerations include the maximum lot coverage of 50%, allotting the required indoor and outdoor amenity space per unit, and providing adequate parking space. Our building covers approximately 600 metres squared, with at least 20 metres squared being indoor amenity space, and outdoor amenity space in the form of balconies, yards, and greenspace. There is a parking lot containing fifteen parking spaces, paved with permeable pavement for stormwater management. Other forms of low impact development, such as a bioswale or rain garden, could also be possible.

HERITAGE CLASSIFICATION

Interestingly, 15 Queen Street is considered Class D, or “non-contributing,” under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act. Buildings under this class are permitted to have additions built, as long as they are complementary but distinguishable from the original building. Some restrictions to Class D buildings that were relevant to our design include preserving the existing pedestrian and vehicle access to the property, respecting the neighbouring buildings, and ensuring any added parking is hidden from the street.

PLANNING GOALS

The Community Strategic Plan of Innisfil, of which Cookstown is a part, upholds three main values with which we attempted to have our design align:

Connect | Grow recreation opportunities & promote tourism

- “Strengthen social connections by providing opportunities for social interaction through public places and activities in those places to build a stronger sense of community;”
- “Celebrate Innisfil’s arts, culture and heritage by preserving built heritage resources,”

Grow | Plan for growth, develop our community, & promote economic development

- “Manage growth in the Town in an appropriate manner that promotes intensification, provides for a range of housing choices, commercial services and employment opportunities”

Sustain | Ensure financial sustainability, support community sustainability, & promote environmental sustainability

- “Enhance the vitality of the downtowns in each of the settlement areas;”
- “Promote the efficient use of existing municipal infrastructure and community facilities and plan in an efficient and financially sustainable way for the expansion of such infrastructure and facilities.”

HERITAGE DISTRICT GOALS

Buildings:

- 3.1.1.2. Encouraging the retention, conservation and adaptation of the District's heritage buildings and attributes, as described in the Study and Plan, rather than their demolition and replacement;
- 3.1.1.4. Providing guidance for new development that promotes growth and infill that is compatible and that maintains, enhances and appropriately incorporates the historical character of Cookstown;

Land Use: (3.1.3 To maintain the mixed use character of the Cookstown Heritage Conservation District in order to foster and grow its role as a centre for specialty retail and tourism in the Town of Innisfil, its place as the social and historical heart of the community and its vibrant main street by:)

- 3.1.3.4. Ensuring that infill development or redevelopment is compatible with the heritage character and pedestrian scale of the District.

Economy, Tourism, Culture: (3.1.4. To ensure that the Cookstown Heritage Conservation District promotes economic growth, increases tourism and further enhances cultural assets in Cookstown by:)

- 3.1.4.3 Promoting the pedestrian scale, walkability, liveability and a range of retail options within Cookstown, so as to maintain the mixed use focus and continue to draw new employment and commercial activities to the community core.

SUGGESTED RE-USES

In line with the core values outlined above, as well as its plot configuration, central location, and Class D designation, 15 Queen Street is well positioned for gentle intensification. We recommend that the existing building retain its current uses, with the ground floor being split into 2 retail units, and the second floor remaining as 2 residential units. To the rear of the existing building we propose the addition of a 3 storey hybrid apartment building with a total of 8 new residential units. While the specific retail uses will be subject to demand and availability, we have defined some key themes based on the building's historical significance. These key themes serve as guidelines for how the choice of retail storefronts can actively function as tools of heritage interpretation.

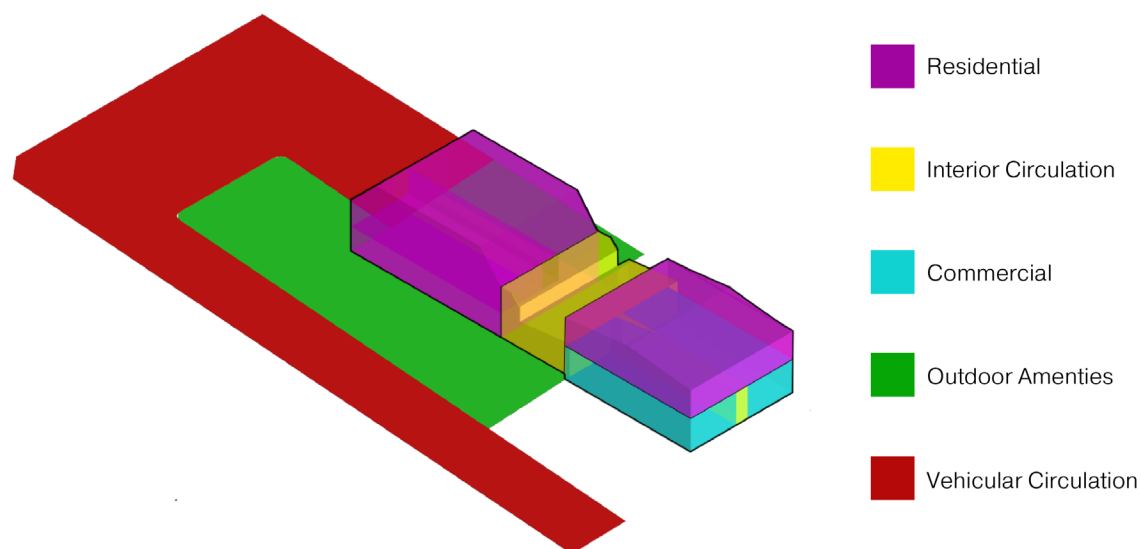


Fig. 6. Land Use Diagram

THEMES

1. Flexibility

Since its construction, the building has offered several tenants the opportunity to run a myriad of businesses: pharmacies, general stores, hardware stores, veterinary clinics, grocery stores, and a barbershop for example. The building saw handshakes between formal business partners, the labours of Cookstown couples, and the imagination of enterprising entrepreneurs. The building has shown substantial flexibility by repeatedly meeting the demands of its varied occupants, regardless of their business.

This is perhaps the building's greatest asset, and it is certainly one that time has not diminished. The building's future use is limited by neither its location nor its interior arrangement; it remains an ample and adaptable space at the heart of Cookstown that will embrace thoughtful alterations and new tenants.

- Grocery Store
- Repair Cafe
- Daycare

2. Transportation

The village of Cookstown sits at the crossroads of highways 89 and 27. The earliest European settlers took advantage of this by establishing businesses that could easily capitalise on the constant trickle of travellers. This later developed with the construction of railways which saw Cookstown serviced by a coach that took passengers east to the Northern Railway train station in Gilford before the village received a stop of its own on the Hamilton and North Western Railway line. The latter railway line has since become a trail allowing the community to enjoy any recreational method of transportation they wish. Transportation is also playing a role in Cookstown's future, as a good percentage of people moving into the village commute to workplaces in the GTA. Additionally, Highway 89 today remains the main east-west thoroughfare through the town and is often seen full of cars passing by on summer road trips.

Cookstown's intimate tie with transportation and the proximity of the recreational trail led us to consider what businesses might offer transportation related services.

- Bike Repair Shop
- Travel Agency
- Hiking/Outdoor Equipment Store

3. Pairs

The number 2 appeared coincidentally in a few different sources. The building was originally a duplex and housed two businesses on the main floor. Secondly, the potential sister building at 10 Queen St. ties together a pair of properties along the main street with similar architectural features. Finally, amongst the pages of the 19th-century Cookstown directories there were multiple advertisements for the coach to Gilford train station, which ran twice daily. While the connection between these is somewhat oblique, and does not directly suggest any opportunities for re-use, it heavily influences the physical design choices for this proposal.

- Clinic + Pharmacy
- Vet + Pet Store
- Dry Cleaning + Tailor



Fig. 7. Concept Render of Bike Shop

PHYSICAL DESIGN



Fig. 8. Elevation Renders of 15 Queen St. Facade

The proposed design for 15 Queen St. prioritizes the balance between respecting the local architectural context, and referencing the historical themes of the site.

In order to minimize changes to the existing streetscape, the facade of the original building should see only minor alterations. While the ground floor is split into 2 separate commercial units, the facade will maintain its single entrance, with entry to the units held on the interior. We also propose the addition of an awning and second bench as small details to encourage gathering and rest, permanent ancillary uses beyond those that will be defined by the eventual retail tenants. These minor alterations will mitigate the effect on the local street context while referencing the site's history as a flexible space that met multiple needs.

We propose that the original building also revitalize the brick underneath the metal siding on the east and west exterior walls, so as to reveal a layer of history that has been hidden. The metal siding which, while partially damaged by a storm, is in relatively good condition and can be reused as a feature of the proposed addition.

The proposed addition will connect directly to the rear of the original building and carry through the brick exterior to create a sense of visual cohesion. The addition should feature a dichromatic style as a reference to the historic brickwork found on the site prior to its mid-century alterations. The addition will feature 3 storeys with 2 levels of 2 storey residential units. The first storey of units will contain separate exterior entryways, while the second storey units can be accessed through interior circulation corridors. This hybrid apartment style explicitly references the site's history of flexibility and pairs. Standing at 9 metres and tucked directly behind the original building, the addition is almost invisible from the street level (see Fig. 5).

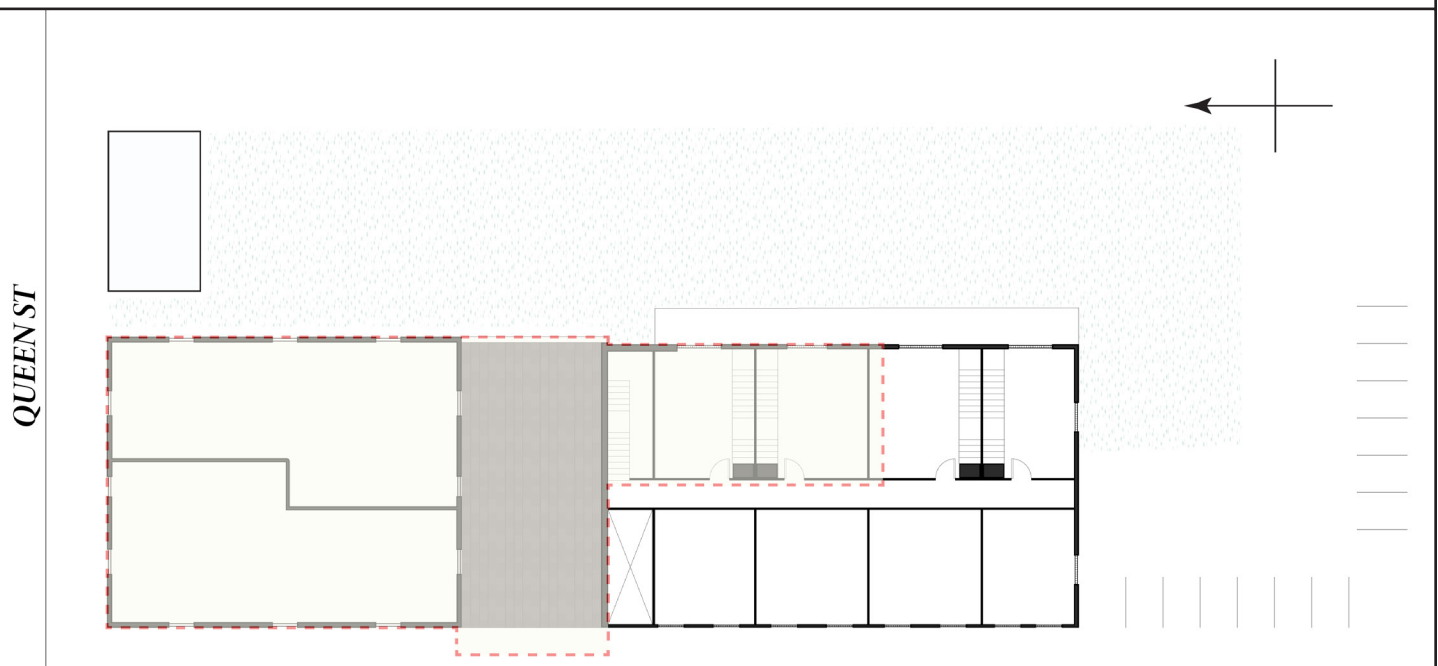


Fig. 9. Plan Diagram of 15 Queen St. Addition

FINAL THOUGHTS

Cookstown is a rural community and is unlikely to have shared equally in the prosperity of the rest of the province. As a result, the town has remained relatively untouched (hence so many historic buildings). The influx of money into the village now is putting developmental pressure on a community that has never experienced it. It would be a shame to see Cookstown lose what is a significant building under the pretense of bettering the community or safety.

If there is money to be made in this village, it will be done by investing in the existing fabric and cooperating with the residents. It will be done by enhancing the charming character of Queen St. and benefitting from the image the community has worked to create and now are being forced to protect.

The village of Cookstown may only be a dot at an Ontario crossroads, but to the people who live there, it is home.



Fig. 10. Concept Render of 15 Queen St. Proposal exterior

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