

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The report assesses the candidacy of a portion of CFB Esquimalt for a heritage district redevelopment that incorporates non-military tourist-historic and recreational uses. The report centres specifically on heritage building conservation at the west-end of CFB Esquimalt's dockyard. Conservation efforts at Portsmouth Naval Base, England and Charlestown Navy Yard, Boston are analysed and compared to CFB Esquimalt. The analysis serves as a base for recommendations made for conservation efforts at CFB Esquimalt's dockyard. The term "heritage conservation" is used in the context of this report to mean the retention as opposed to the demolition and loss of older buildings and sites.

CFB Esquimalt dockyard is located at the southeastern end of Vancouver Island, on Juan de Fuca Strait, British Columbia, Canada. CFB Esquimalt, one of two major naval bases in Canada, is occupied solely by military uses. The primary industrial function at the dockyard is ship maintenance and repair centered on C Jetty and the Ship Repair Unit (Pacific) SRU(P) buildings. The dockyard contains approximately 100 buildings which represent over a century of design evolution. The dockyard consists of two principal character areas. One of these areas is the 30-acre, largely homogeneous, high-density, pre-1905 Royal Navy compound at the northwest section of the Dockyard. The second character area was developed for the Royal Canadian Navy beginning in 1938.

Portsmouth Naval Base, Portsmouth Harbor on the south coast of England, has been home to the British Royal Navy for more than 500 years. The heritage area, including historic dockyard buildings, is located within the Portsmouth Naval Base. Portsmouth dockyard dates back to medieval times when, in 1194, King Richard I ordered a dock to be built. Portsmouth is still a working naval base but has been relegated to a second-grade repair and refit establishment. There are 41 listed structures in the Portsmouth Dockyard that comprises 29 buildings, 7 docks and basins, and 5 walls/gates.

Coined "a microcosm of the nation's naval and architectural history", Boston Naval Shipyard was located on Boston Harbor across the Charles River and north of the city's downtown. The Charles River separates the Yard from Boston's Central Business

District. After the shipyard was closed in 1974, the 106 acre sites was transformed into two components: 1) A National Historic Park which is the home of the USS Constitution and 2) The Charlestown Navy Yard, a mixed use area redeveloped by the Boston Redevelopment Authority. Both areas are listed on the National Register of Historic Places because of its general historic and architectural significance. Most of the 86 structures at the yard were built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including solid granite workshops and warehouses and the 1,360-foot long Ropewalk building.

Chapter two outlines the evaluative criteria used for the case comparison. The criteria is designed to evaluate planning principles employed at Portsmouth and Charlestown naval bases that encouraged conservation of the site. Heritage conservation at the three sites is evaluated according to criterion that falls into three broad subject areas: Accessibility, Past Associations, and Financial Feasibility. The sites are assessed to determine if they 'meet the criteria,' 'partially meet the criteria' or 'do not meet the criteria.' An assumption made for the purpose of the report is that CFB Esquimalt dockyard could be exposed to the public. Also, an assumption is made that conservation efforts at CFB Esquimalt, if employed, would involve some degree of public access and enjoyment of the site.

*Accessibility* over land and water to historic dockyards, the first comparative subject area, is of value to commercial and tourist development. *Accessibility* over land and water to the sites is emphasized as one of four characteristics favoring leisure activities in port areas with historic resources. An accessible waterfront also reinforces connections to the waterfront from the surrounding community (the central business area, for example). The three dockyards are evaluated for their access. It is argued in chapters four and five that good access to Charlestown and Portsmouth is a feature that favored their original and continued conservation. The main questions addressed in the detailed analysis for *accessibility* are presented below:

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#### **Accessibility Criteria Employed:**

##### **Access by foot and bicycle along waterfront pathways**

- Is there a public pathway along the historic dockyard's waters edge?;
- If yes, does the path connects to other paths and parts of the city?.

#### **Proximity and visibility from the downtown**

- The public can reach the site from the downtown core by foot in 30 minutes (the site is approximately 1.5 miles/2.4 kilometers from the downtown);
- The dockyard is visible to the public from a main vehicle road.

#### **Public Access to the Site**

- The public has access to the historic dockyard and buildings;
- Public Access to the site is year-round, not seasonal;
- The historic dockyard can be accessed from more than one access points (ie. gate).

*Past associations*, the second comparative criteria subject area, refers to the heritage resources found at the sites. Past associations provide a heritage resource. They are based on the military history at the site and the architectural interest/merit of the heritage buildings that reflect the site's military past. The following criteria are employed to determine the past associations at each site:

#### **Past Associations Criteria Employed:**

- The heritage buildings complement other historic waterfront uses, such as ship displays (maritime past);
- There is an interpretive centre at the dockyard. A museum, for example, tells a story of 'maritime past';
- Style and construction: the buildings are notably rare, unique or an early example of a particular style, type or convention (architectural interest);
- The building arrangement is particularly attractive or unique (architectural interest).

Third, the *financial feasibility* of heritage conservation effort at the three sites is evaluated. The source of funding for heritage conservation and redevelopment at each site are the main points of interest under '*financial feasibility*' (below).

#### **Financial Feasibility Criteria Employed:**

- Government funds are available to initiate the redevelopment process;
- There are opportunities for private investment into the heritage site and/or buildings;
- Project leadership from agencies and non-profit groups initiated the redevelopment process.

The analysis evaluates attributes that are potentially exploitable for historic development as shown in Table E-1.

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**Table E-1  
Case Comparison Evaluation Conclusions\***

Evaluative Criteria	Specific Criteria Employed	Dockyard Evaluated		
		Esquimalt	Portsmouth	Charlestown
Accessibility	Is there a public pathway along the historic dockyards waters edge?	○	○	●
Accessibility	If yes, does the path connect to other paths?	N/A	N/A	●
Accessibility	The public can reach the site from the downtown core by foot in 30 minutes (the site is approximately 1.5 miles/2.4 kilometers from the downtown) (Leung, 1994, 87).	○	●	●
Accessibility	The dockyard is visible to the public from a main vehicle road.	○	●	●
Accessibility	The public has access to the historic dockyard and buildings.	●	●	●
Accessibility	Public Access to the site is year-round.	○	●	●
Accessibility	The historic dockyard is accessed from more than one gate.	○	○	●
Maritime Past	The heritage buildings complement historic waterfront uses, such as ship displays.	○	●	●
Maritime Past	There is an interpretive centre at the historic dockyard. A Museum, for example, tells a story of 'maritime past'	○	●	●
Maritime Past	An annual event at the dockyard celebrates the site's naval history.	○	●	●
Maritime Past	Style and Construction: Buildings are notably rare, unique or an early example of a particular style, type or convention.	●	●	●
Maritime Past	Building Arrangement: building composition, and/or detail is particularly attractive, unique.	●	●	●
Financial Feasibility	There are Federal Government Funds to Initiate the Redevelopment Process.	○	●	●
Financial Feasibility	Dockyard Redevelopment is Commercially Motivated	○	●	●
* 'does not meet the criteria'		○		
'partially meets the criteria'		●		
'does not meet the criteria'		●		

The conclusions include a brief discussion outlining 'lessons learned' from Portsmouth Historic Dockyard and Charlestown Navy Yard for Esquimalt's dockyard. Short, medium and long-term recommendations for the dockyard's future heritage planning include:

### Short Term Recommendation

1. Stabilize and hold the structures vacant or in an interim use (for example, as warehouse space) until a redevelopment plan can be formulated and implemented.

### Medium and Long-term Recommendations

1. Visitors should be made aware of the dockyard as a reminder of British Imperial interest in North America and the later evolution of the Canadian navy.
2. The treatment of the sites, in terms of both preservation and presentation, should respect their lengthy histories<sup>i</sup>.
3. The historic relationship between buildings, landscape features and open space should be retained. It is not recommended to remove or relocate historic buildings or landscape features, thus destroying the historic relationship between buildings, landscape features and open space.
4. Public access to CFB Esquimalt's dockyard should be carefully planned to attract the public to the site and place it on the public's 'mental map' of the City.
5. Federal funds are needed to initiate the conservation and redevelopment process.

The following outlines key historic conservation "lessons" for CFB Esquimalt's historic dockyard based on conservation efforts at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard and Charlestown Navy Yard:

1. Complete Military withdrawal from the dockyard may not be necessary before the buildings and site are rehabilitated. Plans for redevelopment, especially at Charlestown Navy Yard, were consistent with the protection of the buildings and areas of historic value. This is perhaps the most important lesson for Esquimalt's dockyard.
2. Charlestown Navy Yard and Portsmouth Historic Dockyard are strategically marketed to the public based on the heritage resources, which is a lesson for future planning of Esquimalt. Planners for the dockyard may wish to 'market' the CFB Esquimalt's dockyard based on the unique building arrangement, age and diversity of architectural styles and original historic setting.
3. A mixed development concept was deemed appropriate at Charlestown Navy Yard and Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, which may also be appropriate in the medium and long term for Esquimalt's dockyard.
4. Public access to and through the site was carefully planned, which encouraged favorable redevelopment at Charlestown Navy Yard. Carefully planned public access is important for encouraging people to visit historic resources, and is a key consideration for CFB Esquimalt's future.
5. The prospects for heritage-based regeneration are heavily dependent on the willingness of naval authorities to make available land and buildings for which they have no further use. Hence, an important lesson for planning Esquimalt dockyard is

that heritage-based regeneration must be centred on available resources that have been exclusively turned over for heritage use.

6. The physical attractiveness of the buildings and site at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard and Charlestown Navy Yard were an asset and impetus for rehabilitating the historic buildings on the site. Similarly, the architecture at Esquimalt is the site's most valuable resource. A lesson for CFB Esquimalt's rehabilitation plan should be a vision of the dockyard as a historically significant place whose development merits particular consideration with respect to form, scale, detail and materials.

The case comparison conclusions indicate that CFB Esquimalt dockyard's most valuable asset is the historic fabric of buildings and the connection of the dockyard to the 'historic past'. A short-term recommendation is to retain the heritage buildings. The evaluation also shows that, compared to redevelopment efforts at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard and Charlestown Navy Yard, access (visual access, proximity from downtown, access by foot and bicycle etc.) to CFB Esquimalt dockyard is limited. An element that may have a consuming effect on heritage at the dockyard is limited funding available for the conservation process. Heritage redevelopment for a historic district in the short term is not recommended because of constraints such as lack of funding and security issues.