

# **Appendix G**

## **News Media Articles**

This Appendix contains some of the news articles published about the MPSC/ AIA 150 process over the past year. It does not include the most recent articles about the transmittal of the final report. Media attention also included radio reports and interviews which are not documented here.



## Business Resources

# AIANH spearheads effort to renew downtown Durham

By Roger Wood

Friday, March 14, 2008

After a year of study, a committee in Durham is close to completing the final design concept for a new village center that, if implemented, would replace a nearly 10-acre strip mall — Mill Plaza, located on Mill Road — next to the University of New Hampshire.



Three architectural teams have donated their efforts to the project, an initiative of the New Hampshire chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

According to Patricia Sherman, a retired architect, the organization chose the town as part of the "Blueprint for America," a nationwide commitment to mark the 150th anniversary of the AIA's founding.

"We decided that we would try to work with a community and help them develop a parcel in a way where it was a very collaborative process."

Sherman spearheaded the project for the AIANH.

"I sort of dreamed it up. It takes a lot of time to do something like this, and because I'm retired, I have a little more time than most of my compatriots."

Sherman said that the architectural group sent out requests for proposals to every town and city in the state.

"We eventually short-listed it down to six, and chose Durham for a whole lot of reasons that made sense."

AIANH has an extensive list of requirements to qualify for the program. They include, but are not limited to:

- Preservation of open space and the environment in an urban area
- Pedestrian access and the reduction of vehicular traffic
- The willingness of the municipality to make zoning changes for the project
- A developer willing to partner with the community to move the project forward
- Excellence of project design

As part of the collaboration, AIA New Hampshire has partnered with the town, along with PlanNH, The Jordan Institute, Granite State Landscape Architects and the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance.

Three teams of architects were involved in the design process. The firms, which donated the time pro bono, included Lavallee Brensinger Architects of Manchester, Collaborative Designs Inc., Kingston, Schoonmaker Architects, Durham, Pro Con Inc., Hooksett, Woodburn & Co., architect Walter Rous of Durham, Fabianna Orlando Associates, Portsmouth, Rob Westhelle Associates, Portsmouth, JSA Inc., Portsmouth, and The Outdoor Room, Newmarket.

## Hybrid plan

After three rounds of draft proposals for the property, the teams presented what they call a "hybrid" concept for redevelopment to the public. About 75 Durham residents attended the Feb. 20 forum to see the plan, comment on it and ask questions of the Mill Plaza Study Committee which is working on a finished plan.

Dave Howland, who chairs the committee, said that the town is "very fortunate" to have been chosen for the AIANH project. "Durham is an interesting college town community, and I think that played a role in their selection by the AIANH. We as a committee looked at our town's master plan and goals, and lined them up with the architectural organization's priorities, and they were strikingly similar."

Howland also pointed out that the AIANH's involvement in the project was crucial to the committee's progress in developing proposals for re-development of the current shopping area.

"I think that without the AIA, we would have come up with a far more humble and limited product. It might have been similar in structure, but it certainly would not have been as in-depth. Having them involved in the project allowed us to double or triple our efforts."

The advisory committee asked AIANH to work on several proposals, with the objective of producing alternatives for the plaza's redevelopment.

"We were able to narrow that down. The hybrid plan is kind of a distillate of the best ideas that we saw in the others." He added, "I think we ended up with something that is reflective of the evolution of our thinking about this." Howland said that the final proposal includes some but not all of the earlier drafts.

Specifically, the final plan could result in demolition of some of the existing retail buildings, locate a multi-level parking garage in the center of the property, create pedestrian paths through the newly-developed center, and provide a buffer to protect the adjacent College Brook. It also would strive to protect the residential area behind the plaza from noise.

Several residents at the recent forum also expressed concerns about light pollution, something the committee is hoping to mitigate through design.

The AIANH architects, Howland said, will work with the advisory committee all the way through the design process, and the completion of a final report. That document will be forwarded to the Durham zoning board and town council for their consideration.

Committee chair Howland noted that the site is privately owned and requires a commitment from its owner, John Pinto.

"A lot of it depends on how John views it, what he would like to do, and what the market conditions are. What we have now on the site we could live with, but it could be a lot better."

The advisory committee hopes to finish its deliberations by March, but committing it to paper could take longer.

## Community helping shape mixed-use Mill Plaza project in Durham

By AARON SANBORN  
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Article Date: Saturday, February 23, 2008

DURHAM — Officials are approaching the ninth-inning in their yearlong effort of designing the Mill Plaza property.

On Wednesday night about 100 residents gathered at the Oyster River Middle School to view the most recent hybrid design of the property. The design included a grocery store in the center of the property, a parking garage, space for office buildings and housing, and a roundabout at the intersection of Main Street and Madbury Road.

A new two-story library at the edge of the wooded southeast corner of the property, along with a road to access the library and a pedestrian and bike pathway, were also featured on the design.

"This is the latest amalgam of our first two rounds of designs," said Dave Howland, chair of the Mill Plaza Study Committee. "It's still very much a work in progress."

At two previous meetings residents viewed multiple designs prepared by three teams of architects; there was only one design at Wednesday's meeting. Howland said residents were generally in favor of the recent design.

"One thing can be said. We received in the past year a clear sense of what the community would like to see," Howland said.



**Bill Schoonmaker, an architect and member of AIANH, presents an idea for the Durham Mill Plaza project to community residents, who met Wednesday at Oyster River Middle School. (Aaron Leclerc/Staff photographer)**

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**Private architect and member of AIANH, Bill Schoonmaker, presents an idea for the Durham Mill Plaza project to community residents, who met Wednesday at Oyster River Middle School. (Aaron Leclerc/Staff photographer)**

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The study committee will meet again in March to discuss feedback from the meeting and decide the next step. Howland said the committee would like to prepare a final report in the near future and present it to the Town Council. Howland couldn't estimate when the final report would be done but did admit the committee is approaching the ninth-inning in their work.

"It's not gonna go on forever," Howland joked.

The committee is also awaiting the feedback of property owner John Pinto, who wasn't at the latest meeting.

Town Administrator Todd Selig also attended the meeting and said he's pleased with the committee's work and thinks they've done a good job presenting the community's vision of the project, but noted that Pinto still needs to weigh in.

"I would like to stress that this is an ongoing process and we haven't taken into account the owner's perspective," he said. "That step still needs to take place."

Community involvement and feedback have been essential in the process of designing a village center for the property. The town has also been heavily involved in the process along with the American Institute of Architects in New Hampshire. In April 2006, the town and the AIANH, joined forces.

The AIANH was seeking a host town for the N.H. Community Planning Model initiative for the "Blueprint of America," in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the AIA. Durham responded to AIANH's request for proposal and was selected for help in the Mill Plaza's redesign.

Wednesday's meeting lasted almost three hours and as people trickled out officials took a straw poll to get a sense of how the community felt about the design, Howland said. Forty people approved of the design, four or five were on the fence about it and only one person thought the committee should change directions in the project, according to Howland.



**Bob Crooks of Durham asks a question about the development of the Mill Plaza area Wednesday during a public meeting at the Oyster River Middle School. (Aaron Leclerc/Staff photographer)**

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DURHAM

# Mill Plaza design concept on display Wednesday

By AARON SANBORN  
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DURHAM — A final design concept presentation Wednesday for the Mill Plaza property will bring to an end a yearlong effort between the community and state architects.

The town has been working with the state's chapter of the American Institute of Architects for the last year in hopes of using community feedback to create a "village center" for the property.

Wednesday's will be the last in a series of three meetings, where residents have a chance to collaborate with town officials and architects on the design for the property. At the two meetings prior, residents viewed multiple designs prepared by three teams of architects. At the coming meeting, there will be just one design presented by one team of architects.

"This is probably one of the best chances for residents to view the design and make a difference," said Dave Howland, chair of the Mill Plaza Study Committee.

Howland said the newest design incorporates the design of a new two-story library at the edge of the wooded southeast corner of the property, along with a road to access the library and a pedestrian and bike pathway. The design on display Wednesday will also incorporate ideas from past sketches, such as like space for offices and shops.

Feedback from this meeting will be put toward the final design and a final report for the Durham Town Council.

"One way or another we're going to try to finish by March," Howland said. "I think we've done pretty well and I think people are eager to finish it up."

The Mill Plaza Study Committee was created in February 2007 after the Town Council received encouragement from Mill Plaza

See **DESIGN**, B4

## Design

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owner John Pinto to explore how the property might be redeveloped in a way that would suit the community.

In April, the town and the American Institute of Architects in New Hampshire, AIANH, joined forces. The AIANH was seeking a host town for the N.H. Community Planning Model initiative for the "Blueprint of America," in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the AIA.

Durham responded to AIANH's request for proposal and was selected for help in the Mill Plaza's redesign.

Town Administrator Todd Selig said it's been a long process and he and the council are looking forward to seeing the final design and report in March.

"We're eager to see what the final vision will look like," Selig said. "My hope is for a long-term resolution that will please the community and owner."

The meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. in the multipurpose room of Oyster River Middle School.



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## Redeveloping mill plaza

### Hybrid design unveiled at public hearing

Keeley Smith

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Picture this: a brand-new multi-level town library, substantial parking, a small- town inn, a larger Durham Marketplace and cafes that flow onto Main Street. Trees would line this urban oasis and a gazebo would stand across the street from a crystal-clear College Brook.

"It could be beautiful," said Durham Marketplace Owner and Mill Plaza Study Committee member Chuck Cressy. "The Plaza and Main Street could be one, and everything would tie in together."

Cressy's vision is shared by many last Wednesday's final public hearing for the Mill Plaza Redevelopment at Oyster River Middle School committee revealed. A group of architects presented a final hybrid design to about sixty members of the public in a multipurpose room at Oyster River Middle School. Audience members ranged from lifelong residents to university students.

"To put it simply, downtown Durham needs re-shaping," said Mill Plaza Study Committee Vice Chair Julian Smith.

Roger Hayden, owner of The Outback and Hayden Sports, said, "It's about time the town faces the facts. To help the downtown thrive, they actually have to do something."



Media Credit: Michael Rice



Media Credit: Courtesy Photo

The Mill Plaza Study Committee began meetings last February after Durham won a grant from the American Institute of Architecture, in celebration of its 150th Anniversary. According to committee chair Dave Howland, the committee has been working with the AIA in creating development ideas. The final goal is to present a collective vision to John Pinto, the New York based owner.

The design has been through multiple phases, with changes coming in response to feedback from the community at similar public hearings, along with opinions from the Mill Plaza Study Committee. Various architectural, economical and environmental studies influenced the concept as well.

AIA New Hampshire Co-Chair Patricia Sherman said that the environment was one of the biggest factors in designing the Mill Pond property.

"The AIA has a list of criteria addressing environmental control," said Sherman. "We wanted to understand, especially with College Brook running by the property, what do we do to clean it up?"

Others were concerned with increased noise and traffic, building height, the library location and whether a proposed roundabout on Main Street would actually fit. Still others worried if the design that would enable semi-trucks to arrive at the re-located Rite-Aid and Durham Marketplace as efficiently.

Architect Bill Schoonmaker, working with a group of other architects in what he dubs the "Midnight Oil Team," cautioned meeting participants that the designs were ultimately conceptual.

"We still need to refine the design, and the owner has the final say," Schoonmaker said.

"John Pinto has been aware of every step of the process," Howland, a UNH professor, said. "This is a very non-traditional way of doing things."

He said that in most towns private developers present a plan to town officials, and most of the work is done behind the scenes.

"Usually, the public has less input," said Howland. "With the committee, we've been able to talk to different people and build a consensus."

An example of a recent agreement came last month, with the Library Board of Trustees unanimously approving the site of the new library in the Southeast corner of the Mill Plaza property.

"In any given town, people don't see eye-to-eye," Howland said. "But we've been able to work through it."



"In any given town, people don't see eye-to-eye," Howland said. "But we've been able to work through it."

The committee consists of a diverse coalition of council members, neighborhood residents, local business owners, landlords, representatives from UNH, the Library Board of Trustees, Historic District and Planning board.

Howland is one of the representatives of the Faculty neighborhood, where he has been a homeowner for nine years.

The consensus-building has obviously worked. Smith, a councilman, said that there has not been any "real opposition" to the project. He said the committee has not heard any objections since "one meeting back in April."

Including the public in the decision-making process has proved effective as well.

"We have been very open - clear and transparent," Bagelry owner and committee member Warren Daniel said. "It's made the public invested in their own future."

Business owners are especially cheerful about future changes.

Cressy envisions a new Durham Marketplace at least 50 percent larger than the one that exists today.

"We would bring in many new food categories, including many international foods, such fresh Indian," said Cressey. "And we'd bring in a larger sushi bar. Right now there's just no room for that."

Peter Marcoux, owner of Libby's Bar and Grill, said that any additions to Durham would be positive. "Whatever you can develop in Durham that keeps the people in the downtown is a good thing for business," he said.

Hayden said, "If they can actually develop and bring in more stores, it will help the whole downtown. Right now, the downtown is dead."

Downtown Durham was not always as small as it is today.

Hayden said that as recently as fifteen years ago, the greater number of restaurants in the downtown kept students "congregating in main business areas." Now, he said, "Why come to downtown Durham when you can go into Portsmouth or Dover, where new stores open all the time?"

In 1965, when Smith first came to Durham, he said he could buy shoes and socks on Main Street.

"In fact," he said, "the last suit I bought was in downtown Durham, when a store actually sold them. Back in those days, students wouldn't need a car to buy the essentials."

Committee members, people working for the American Institute of Architecture, and business owners are hoping for a bit of a return to the old days.

The Union Leader (Manchester NH)

September 9, 2007 Sunday  
STATE EDITION

Durham getting a re-do

**BYLINE:** CLYNTON NAMUO Sunday News Correspondent

**SECTION:** LOCAL; Pg. B1

**LENGTH:** 533 words

**DURHAM --** Four designs for a revamped Mill Plaza were unveiled in a public forum yesterday, each presenting a vision for a dramatically different downtown.

The four designs contain similar elements, including significant new retail and residential space, as well as expanded parking and automobile access from Main Street. But the layout of each is markedly different. The final design is expected to take cues from each of the proposals and mesh them together based on public input.

Anchored by the only major grocer in town, Durham Marketplace, the Mill Plaza is a bustling part of downtown Durham, but has remained cut off from the rest of Main Street's businesses. The plaza, near the corner of Main Street and Mill Road, is situated on a small hillside and not accessible from Main Street.

Each of the four designs strives to better integrate the Mill Plaza into the rest of downtown by allowing traffic from Main Street into the plaza and by developing more retail and residential space to make the plaza a more vibrant town center.

The four designs were submitted by three different groups: Lavalley Brensinger, of Manchester; a team led by local architect Bill Schoonmaker; and JSA Inc., of Portsmouth, which submitted two different plans.

The Brensinger design includes a series of townhouses down Mill Road as well as retail and office buildings situated around a parking structure. In total the plan has about 35,000 square feet of new retail space, 32,000 square feet of office space and 90,000 square feet of residential space.

The Schoonmaker design is focused on a new road running from Mill Road around the plaza up to Main Street that is supposed to encourage more activity from Main Street to flow into the

plaza. The design includes about 230,000 square feet of retail and commercial space and about 140 housing units.

"It's the best we've got for a downtown right now," Schoonmaker said of Main Street, "but it's kind of one sided."

The two designs submitted by JSA are very different, with one being similar to the Schoonmaker plan of creating a street to snake around the plaza and the other including a row of housing units along Mill Road.

Public comments on the four designs were generally favorable yesterday, but many focused on possible problems with parking at the plaza and the cost of building a structure.

Others also spoke about changing the flow of traffic through downtown from one-way to two ways.

The designs are all considered concepts at this point, and public comments will lead to changes, officials said, with a review of the current designs scheduled for the next Mill Plaza Study Committee meeting on Sept. 19 at town hall from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

A final design, to be hammered out over the next few months, is expected to be completed by year's end.

Details about who will develop the property and how the project will be financed have yet to be worked out. The design phase of the project is being done for free with the help of the American Institute of Architects New Hampshire Chapter, which is doing the plans as part of a 150th anniversary celebration for the organization.

Details of the designs are expected to be posted on the town's Web site, [www.ci.durham.nh.us](http://www.ci.durham.nh.us).

## LOCAL

# Plans continue to redevelop Mill Plaza

By JIM HADDADIN  
Democrat Staff Writer

DURHAM — Residents, town officials and designers moved one step closer Wednesday to drafting a multi-million dollar redevelopment plan for the Mill Plaza.

At a public workshop, representatives from the committee studying the project detailed the current conditions of the site and asked for input from the public about their design plans, which include a new parking garage and town library, as well as a mix of retail, office, and housing space in several new, multi-story buildings.

The Mill Plaza Study Committee hosted its second large, pub-

lic workshop on Wednesday night at the Memorial Union Building. About 60 people attended the meeting, including residents and members of the design teams that will be tasked to develop plans for the site.

According to Patricia Sherman, the co-chair of a group of volunteer designers from the American Institute of Architects working on the project, the current 9-acre site has the possibility for significant expansion if the owners of adjoining properties choose to participate in the redevelopment. Sherman cited a row of buildings that abut the plaza along the city's Main Street as an area that could provide additional frontage and a connec-

tion between the plaza and the city's downtown.

The Mill Plaza is surrounded by nearly five acres of additional space that could be used to increase the scope of the project. In addition to the Main Street properties, Sherman said that an undeveloped hill to the east of the plaza provides a good location for a new parking structure and that land to the south could be used as a valuable buffer between the project and a residential neighborhood that runs along the brook.

Sherman also said that the project would likely require additional access points to reduce the impact on local traffic and allow for emergency and trans-

portation vehicles to move in and out of the plaza. She said that the University of New Hampshire is interested in providing a bus stop with a shelter at the site for students.

Promoting public transportation and pedestrian traffic will be one of the project's goals as designers begin drafting preliminary plans in the next few weeks, according to Sherman. She said that providing a mix of retail, office, and housing units will provide incentive for people to walk to the plaza and cut down on the number of trips that residents will have to make to complete their errands.

Peter Andersen, a resident who lives on Chesley Drive near

the southeast corner of the property, said that neighborhood members had some concerns about additional flooding in the brook and the loss of a heavily used pedestrian walkway near the plaza.

"It's one of the nicest approaches into the town," Andersen said of the path the passes by his property into the site. "I'm talking out in danger of appearing to be a NIMBY, but I know that a lot of residents feel the same way."

Sherman said that designers would take into account the existing qualities of the site when developing their plans.

"What we want to do is preserve the natural quality of the

brook as much as possible," she said. Sherman added that the committee will look at the possibility of clearing up invasive weeds and storm run-off that have accumulated at the brook over time to cut down on the flooding in the area.

Three design teams will now synthesize the feedback they received from the public and data about the existing site to sketch their initial designs for the plaza redevelopment. The Study Committee will continue to hold meetings with the public to revise the designs and the group hopes to present a completed hybrid of the three teams' plans to plaza owner John Pinto in December.

## Northern Tier update

Written by Matt Kanner  
Wednesday, 18 April 2007

Developers of an ambitious project at the Parade Mall in Portsmouth hope to create a pedestrian-friendly shopping area in the Northern Tier, including retail shops, restaurants, condominiums and offices—and yet another new hotel.

Lisa DeStefano, owner of DeStefano Architects in Portsmouth, and Jeff Johnson, principal of Cathartes Private Investments in Boston, presented their updated plans for the Parade Mall site, between Deer and Hanover streets, to the Downtown Business Association on the morning of April 10 and to the Historic District Commission that night. The project would include 15 to 20 shops, three or four restaurants, 28 condominiums and an underground parking facility with 300 spaces. It would also include a 147-room extended stay hotel, which developers say is necessary despite the recent construction of a Hilton Garden Inn just down the street and the pending construction of a Westin Hotel nearby.

Johnson estimated the project would create more than 800 jobs and generate close to \$1.5 million in sales annually from employee lunch expenditures. The current Parade Mall building, which houses Path Lab Inc. and several other businesses, would be torn down to make way for new buildings on the four-acre site. Businesses currently in the Parade Mall building are expected to be looking for office space elsewhere, according to Cathartes representatives.

Construction is expected to last between 14 and 18 months, beginning in summer 2008, pending construction approval.

Guests at the DBA meeting, held at the Portsmouth Gas Light Co. on Market Street, inquired whether the new project would address the growing need for affordable housing in the city. Johnson said all condos would be sold at market value. In response to another question, Johnson said the new retail spaces would likely include a number of chain stores.

DeStefano and Johnson believe the project will extend the downtown area and create a link to future projects on Maplewood Avenue, where plans call for the former Portsmouth Herald building to be torn down to make way for similar development. The Parade Mall project does not require any zoning variances, but the Portsmouth Planning Board still must approve the proposal.

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### Film

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