

### III. Vision Statement

This section of the report contains the vision statements that guided design work of the three AIA150 teams. Below is the original annotated MPSC vision statement, followed by a combined vision statement of the MPSC, AIA150 and LEED Program.

#### Mill Plaza Study Committee Vision Statement

*Adopted unanimously on May 2, 2007*

##### **Preamble**

Based on initial public input, our deliberations thus far, and recommendations in the Durham Master Plan, Durham Community Development Plan, and the Town Council's charge (Res # 2006-25), we the Mill Plaza Study Committee, have developed the following ten-part Vision Statement for the purpose of guiding the development of conceptual designs and our recommendations for redeveloping the Mill Plaza property. For further context, the attached appendix includes excerpts from key planning and policy documents – as well as recent public testimony and correspondence – relevant to each of the ten principles below.

##### **Ten Principles for Mill Plaza Redevelopment**

1. **Open Process:** The redevelopment should result from a genuine, thorough, and public conversation with Durham residents and should be brought to reality – taking the public's recommendations to heart – in a timely fashion.
2. **Community-Oriented Space:** The redevelopment should provide year-round community space – indoor and outdoor space where people linger to meet and talk to their friends, to shop and to enjoy all of the seasons.
3. **Mixed Uses:** The redevelopment should provide – in addition to an expanded grocery store – a variety of shops, stores and offices, and a variety of housing opportunities for families, including UNH students, faculty, and staff.
4. **Linkage:** The redevelopment should link visually and spatially with Main Street, as well as Mill Road and the UNH campus, to encourage pedestrian flow between town, campus, and the adjoining neighborhoods.
5. **Balanced Access:** The redevelopment should strike a balance among automobile, bicycle, transit, and pedestrian access to the site that ensures the commercial viability of businesses on the property and protects the integrity of the bordering Faculty neighborhood. This balance should include optimal integration of the site into the local street network.
6. **Quality Design:** The redevelopment should stand out as uniquely attractive through a design that embraces the principles of sustainability and green building – and complements its surroundings, from the Main Street and campus on one end, to the brook and quiet residential neighborhood on the other.
7. **College Brook Buffer:** The redevelopment should restore, enhance, and protect College Brook and its wooded buffer to benefit the ecology, add natural beauty to the property, and improve and strengthen the boundary between the core downtown and the bordering residential neighborhood.

8. **Civic Elements:** The redevelopment could include a new permanent town library and town hall. The purchase of adjoining land could be considered for these uses.
9. **Fiscal Enhancement:** The redevelopment should broaden the town's tax base through both the commercial and aesthetic value it adds to our community.
10. **Parking:** The redevelopment should include adequate short and long-term parking for customers, employees, and residents of apartments constructed on the Mill Plaza property. Additional parking to serve downtown Durham could be explored.

## Appendix

This Appendix is intended to demonstrate how our ten principles are supported by recommendations in several key planning and policy documents. It also documents relevant public comments and correspondence. It includes references from:

- ✓ Durham Master Plan 2000
- ✓ Durham Community Development Plan 1995
- ✓ Mill Plaza Committee Council Charge (Res # 2006-25)
- ✓ Letter from Mill Plaza Owner John Pinto to Town Administrator Todd Selig (September 13, 2006):
- ✓ NH Open Meeting Law Title IV Chap 91-A
- ✓ American Institute of Architects' Ten Principles on Living Communities
- ✓ Public Comments (including April 4, 2007 hearing), Letters and E-mails

This is a work in progress that can be augmented throughout the process. In addition to grounding our goals in the work of others who came before us, references below are intended to provide greater context and guidance for us and our architects and designers as we proceed.

### 1. Open Process

Our goal is to encourage public participation and to function as openly as reasonably possible. To that end, we encourage public comment at our regular meetings and have held the first of a number of evening public hearings devoted to public input. Further, we have set up a Web page to post committee documents – including agendas, minutes, announcements and contact information for each committee member. We have advertised an e-mail address for the public that has brought much early correspondence.

#### Mill Plaza Committee Council Charge (Res # 2006-25):

The Town Council has charged us with “the development of a future vision for the Mill Plaza site” with a goal of completing a report by the end of May. We are also to “conduct all activities in accordance with RSA 91-A, the New Hampshire Right to Know Law.”

#### Letter from Mill Plaza Owner John Pinto to Town Administrator Todd Selig (September 13, 2006):

“... I look forward to working with the town as it advances upon the vision for both an improved tax base and better symmetry between the Town, the University and our property. In this regard, I would look to the town to develop design specifications so that we may then determine how best to participate to achieve the implementation of the vision of the Town leadership.”

Durham Community Development Plan 1995:

Improving the Plaza property has been a stated community goal for more than a decade. “Objective: To actively engage the owners of the Mill Plaza in the improvement of the buildings and open spaces” (Page 61).

Durham Master Plan 2000:

Our approach to working with the public is modeled after the town master plan process, which was open and comprehensive.

NH Open Meeting Law Title IV Chap 91-A:

“Preamble: Openness in the conduct of public business is essential to a democratic society. The purpose of this chapter is to ensure both the greatest possible public access to the actions, discussions and records of all public bodies, and their accountability to the people.”

Public Comments, Letters & E-Mails:

A month into the process, more than 100 people have taken advantage of our invitation to provide input to the committee’s work – via our regular meetings, the April 4 public hearing and our e-mail address. While a few questioned the wisdom of developing a public vision on private property – calling the committee’s task “unrealistic” and “a farce” – many expressed thanks for the opportunity provided by property owner John Pinto and the Council to have an early say, and have complimented the open process followed thus far. Several expressed optimism for what could be. One noted that the project presents a good opportunity to expand the town’s tax base by building out its core – as opposed to its more controversial periphery. The project could be done, she said, by following “smart growth” and green building principles.

**2. Community-Oriented Space**

Mill Plaza Committee Council Charge (Res # 2006-25):

“(C) Creating a community gathering space (such as a village green, park, Public Library, municipal office complex, etc.) in the downtown area for Durham residents, students, staff, and faculty at the University of New Hampshire to interact with one another in positive ways specifically designed to foster a sense of community and place in Durham.”

AIA’s Ten Principles on Living Communities:

“6. *Build Vibrant Public Spaces.* Citizens need welcoming, well-defined public places to stimulate face-to-face interaction, collectively celebrate and mourn, encourage civic participation, admire public art, and gather for public events.

7. *Create a Neighborhood Identity.* A ‘sense of place’ gives neighborhoods a unique character, enhances the walking environment, and creates pride in the community.”

Public Comments, Letters & E-Mails:

Several residents at the April 4 public hearing spoke to the need for public gathering space. One noted that Durham has taken a step in the right direction with summer concerts at the Mill Plaza but said the community could do better than setting up “lawn chairs on a parking lot.”

**3. Mixed Uses**

Mill Plaza Committee Council Charge (Res # 2006-25):

“1. A) Increasing the taxable value of the Mill Plaza site. This plan may include a combination of retail space, office space, and rental housing stock, or any other combination of offerings, as determined by the committee and permitted by zoning. B) Broadening the variety of, and square footage available for, retail businesses in the downtown area which would appeal to the permanent residents of the Town.”

Durham Master Plan 2000:

“Create a downtown Durham that has available a wide range of retail and other commercial uses, including the creation of a Professional Office District adjacent to the Central Business District (3.13)”

“Expand office/retail space by allowing apartments to be included as a mixed use on the second and third floors of three-story buildings and on the third and fourth floors of four-story buildings with two floors of commercial space. This plan will provide economic stability due to the income from apartment rentals and will also increase available commercial space (3.15)”

Durham Community Development Plan 1995:

“Encourage the expansion of retail space within the confines for downtown Durham” (Page 54).

AIA’s Ten Principles on Living Communities:

“2. *Provide Choices.* People want variety in housing, shopping, recreation, transportation, and employment. Variety creates lively neighborhoods and accommodates residents in different stages of their lives.”

Public Comments, Letters & E-Mails:

Several residents noted that they value the variety of shops available today in Durham and would not want to lose that in a new development. One said she likes to “park once

and walk” to where she needs to go. “I don’t need to leave Durham,” she said. “I like that.”

#### 4. **Linkage**

##### Durham Master Plan 2000:

“Create a physical and psychological linkage of the Mill Plaza with Main Street and the rest of downtown Durham (3.16).”

#### 5. **Balanced Access**

##### Durham Master Plan 2000:

“Create an environment in downtown Durham that is less vehicle oriented and is more pedestrian oriented and balances the needs of *all* modes of transportation (3.7).”

##### Durham Community Development Plan 1995:

“Goal – An environment in downtown Durham that is pedestrian oriented while balancing needs of *all* modes of transportation. Objective: Create a safe environment for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists” (Page 47).

##### Public Comments, Letters & E-Mails:

At least one resident at the hearing suggested a redevelopment should be welcoming to bicycle riders. Another resident warned that redevelopment should not hinder access to the grocery store by senior citizens who live nearby. One resident stressed that access for emergency vehicles must be a priority in any site design given the potential for new apartments and an increase in visitors to the property.

#### 6. **Quality Design**

##### Durham Master Plan 2000:

“The image and the reality that an active, dense downtown presents is considered desirable, particularly when the downtown has a strong pedestrian presence, as is the case with Durham’s downtown. It is important to promote development that will further improve the character, vitality, and pedestrian use of the downtown. (3.16)”

##### AIA’s Ten Principles on Living Communities:

“10. *Design Matters*. Design excellence is the foundation of successful and healthy communities.”

##### Public Comments, Letters & E-Mails:

Several residents suggested adhering to the principles of green building. A couple have suggested using pervious asphalt to protect College Brook.

## 7. Restored Buffer

### Durham Master Plan 2000:

“College Brook should be restored in those areas where it has experienced degradation. The Mill Pond and adjacent wetlands should be enhanced as a demonstration of the importance of greenway extensions into the downtown core. Enhancement of foot paths and passive recreational use of this area should be encouraged for the benefit of those living in the immediate neighborhood and to enhance the vision of Durham's special relationship with its fresh- and saltwater bodies. Sightings of rare and endangered species have been recorded in the College Brook greenway and Mill Pond area. The fact that unusual and important wildlife sightings can take place immediately adjacent to the Town's commercial core is of great importance to the sense of the Town of Durham as a place where modern presence can exist in concert with nature (4.24).”

“Pedestrian access to the Mill Pond may be encouraged with downtown displays of footpaths such as the pedestrian path to the pond from Main Street and Mill Road through the Mill Plaza to the footpath through the woods that connects with Chesley Drive. This route should be enhanced as a pedestrian gateway to the Mill Pond (4.25).”

“Chesley Drive should specifically be *excluded* from evaluation as an option for improved access to Mill Plaza for the following reasons ... (3.14)”

### AIA's Ten Principles on Living Communities:

“7. *Create a Neighborhood Identity.* A ‘sense of place’ gives neighborhoods a unique character, enhances the walking environment, and creates pride in the community.

8. *Protect Environmental Resources.* A well-designed balance of nature and development preserves natural systems, protects waterways from pollution, reduces air pollution, and protects property values.

9. *Conserve Landscapes.* Open space, farms, and wildlife habitat are essential for environmental, recreational, and cultural reasons.”

### Public Comments, Letters & E-Mails:

We have received several letters from Plaza neighbors and also UNH Natural Resources faculty expressing concern about College Brook and the hope that it would be protected and restored in any redevelopment. Many residents – echoing the language in the Master Plan – place a high value on the College Brook greenway as it represents a slice of nature in the heart of our downtown.

## 8. Civic Elements

### Mill Plaza Committee Council Charge (Res # 2006-25):

“1. The development of a future vision for the Mill Plaza site. This vision may take into consideration abutting parcels as determined appropriate by the committee.

C) Creating a community gathering space (such as a village green, park, Public Library, municipal office complex, etc.) in the downtown area for Durham residents, students, staff, and faculty at the University of New Hampshire to interact with one another in positive ways specifically designed to foster a sense of community and place in Durham.

“3. To examine whether there would be potential economic and social benefits associated with the construction of a municipal Library, Town Office complex, and/or parking facility (either publicly or privately owned) in conjunction with the redevelopment of the Mill Plaza site.”

Public Comments, Letters & E-Mails:

Although one resident dismissed the notion of a library or a city hall on the Plaza Property, which he contended is prime commercial space, others expressed hope the town would establish a new library on the property. One resident cited Dover’s McConnell Center and the new Portsmouth Library as examples of civic centers that can add value to their surroundings.

**9. Fiscal Enhancement**

Mill Plaza Committee Council Charge (Res # 2006-25):

“1. A) Increasing the taxable value of the Mill Plaza site. This plan may include a combination of retail space, office space, and rental housing stock, or any other combination of offerings, as determined by the committee and permitted by zoning.

B) Broadening the variety of, and square footage available for, retail businesses in the downtown area which would appeal to the permanent residents of the Town.”

**10. Parking**

Durham Master Plan 2000:

“Provide parking areas in the downtown that accommodate the retail and commercial needs, maximize number of parking spaces, move traffic through efficiently, are well landscaped, and blend with the desired character of downtown (3.9).”

## EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR THE MILL PLAZA PROJECT 7/11/07

<p><b>Mill Plaza Study Community Principles *</b></p> <p><b>1. Open Process:</b> The redevelopment should result from a genuine, thorough, and public conversation with Durham residents and should be brought to reality – taking the public’s recommendations to heart – in a timely fashion.</p> <p><b>2. Community-Oriented Space:</b> The redevelopment should provide year-round community space – indoor and outdoor space where people linger to meet and talk to their friends, to shop and to enjoy all of the seasons.</p> <p><b>3. Mixed Uses:</b> The redevelopment should provide – in addition to an expanded grocery store – a variety of shops, stores and offices, and a variety of housing opportunities for families, including UNH students, faculty, and staff.</p> <p><b>4. Linkage:</b> The redevelopment should link visually and spatially with Main Street, as well as Mill Road and the UNH campus, to encourage pedestrian flow between town, campus, and the adjoining neighborhoods.</p> <p><b>5. Balanced Access:</b> The redevelopment should strike a balance among automobile, bicycle, transit, and pedestrian access to the site that ensures the commercial viability of businesses on the property and protects the integrity of the bordering Faculty neighborhood. This balance should include optimal integration of the site into the local street network.</p> <p><b>6. Quality Design:</b> The redevelopment should stand out as uniquely attractive through a design that embraces the principles of sustainability and green building – and complements its surroundings, from the Main Street and campus on one end, to the brook and quiet residential neighborhood on the other.</p> <p><b>7. College Brook Buffer:</b> The redevelopment should restore, enhance, and protect College Brook and its wooded buffer to benefit the ecology, add natural beauty to the property, and improve and strengthen the boundary between the core downtown and the bordering residential neighborhood.</p> <p><b>8. Civic Elements:</b> The redevelopment could include a new permanent town library and town hall. The purchase of adjoining land could be considered for these uses.</p> <p><b>9. Fiscal Enhancement:</b> The redevelopment should broaden the town’s tax base through both the commercial and aesthetic value it adds to our community.</p> <p><b>10. Parking:</b> The redevelopment should include adequate short and long-term parking for customers, employees, and residents of apartments constructed on the Mill Plaza property. Additional parking to serve downtown Durham could be explored.</p>	<p><b>AIA150 Principles for Livable Communities ** AIA 2030 Carbon Neutral Criteria ***</b></p> <p>Use of consensus process to convene; clarify responsibilities; deliberate; decide; and implement agreements</p> <p><b>(6) Build Vibrant Public Spaces:</b> Citizens need welcoming, well-defined public places to stimulate face-to-face interaction, collectively celebrate and mourn, encourage civic participation, admire public art, and gather for public events.</p> <p><b>(2) Provide Choices:</b> People want variety in housing, shopping, recreation, transportation, and employment. Variety creates lively neighborhoods and accommodates residents in different stages of their lives.</p> <p><b>(3) Encourage Mixed-Use Development:</b> Integrating different land uses and varied building types creates vibrant, pedestrian-friendly and diverse communities.</p> <p><b>(1) Design on a Human Scale:</b> Compact, pedestrian-friendly communities allow residents to walk to shops, services, cultural resources, and jobs and can reduce traffic congestion and benefit people’s health.</p> <p><b>(5) Vary Transportation Options:</b> Giving people the option of walking, biking and using public transit, in addition to driving, reduces traffic congestion, protects the environment and encourages physical activity.</p> <p><b>(10) Design Matters:</b> Design excellence is the foundation of successful and healthy communities.</p> <p><b>Create a Neighborhood Identity:</b> A “sense of place” gives neighborhoods a unique character; enhances the walking environment, and creates pride in the community.</p> <p><b>(8) Protect Environmental Resources:</b> A well-designed balance of nature and development preserves natural systems, protects waterways from pollution, reduces air pollution, and protects property values.</p> <p><b>(9) Conserve Landscapes:</b> Open space, farms, and wildlife habitat are essential for environmental, recreational, and cultural reasons.</p> <p><b>(4) Preserve Urban Centers:</b> Restoring, revitalizing, and infilling urban centers takes advantage of existing streets, services and buildings and avoids the need for new infrastructure. This helps to curb sprawl and promote stability for city neighborhoods.</p>	<p><b>LEED For Neighborhood Development ****</b></p> <p>Community Outreach and Involvement</p> <p>Access to Public Spaces’ Accessibility Outreach and Involvement</p> <p>Universal Open Community</p> <p>Diversity of Uses Development Housing and Jobs Proximity Sales and Rental Housing</p> <p>Compact Preferred Location Affordable</p> <p>Smart Location Walkable Streets</p> <p>Walkable Street Automobile Dependence Transit Facilities</p> <p>Reduced Bicycle Network</p> <p><i>Integrated design and development at the neighborhood scale.</i></p> <p>Site Design for Habitat or Wetlands Conservation</p> <p>Access to Surrounding Vicinity Preferred Location</p> <p>Innovation in Design:</p> <p>Reduced Parking Footprint</p>
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- Construction Pollution Prevention
- LEED Certified Green Buildings
- Energy Efficiency in Buildings
- Reduced Water Use
- Building Reuse and Adaptive Reuse
- Minimize Site Disturbance through Site Design
- Minimize Site Disturbance during Construction
- Stormwater Management
- Heat Island Reduction
- Solar Orientation
- On-Site Energy Generation
- On-Site Renewable Energy Sources
- District Heating & Cooling
- Infrastructure Energy Efficiency
- Wastewater Management
- Recycled Content for Infrastructure
- Construction Waste Management
- Comprehensive Waste Management
- Light Pollution Reduction
- LEED® Accredited Professional

MPSOC Final Report

\*Communities Vision Principles adopted by the  
Town Council on 6/18/07

\* Ten principals for Liveable Communities  
created by the American Institute of Architects

\* Goal for building to be Carbon Neutral by 2030

\*\*\*\*\* LEED-Neighborhood Development  
A pilot high performance integrated design process  
created by the US Green Building Council LEED  
(Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)  
[www.usgbc.org/leed/nd](http://www.usgbc.org/leed/nd)