



## PLANNING DEPARTMENT

### Town of Durham

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## MEMORANDUM

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TO: Technical Review Group  
FROM: Rick Taintor, Consulting Planner  
DATE: March 11, 2021  
RE: Mill Plaza Redevelopment

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Yesterday Colonial Durham Associates submitted a revised set of site plans for the Mill Plaza Redevelopment project. There have been some significant changes to the plans since the last time the Technical Review Group met to discuss the project in January 2020, and it appears that we are nearing a point at which the Planning Board will be ready to vote on the application. Thus, this is an appropriate time to reconvene and identify any remaining concerns about the project.

The plans are posted on the **Mill Plaza Redevelopment Site Plan & CUP** page on the Town website: [https://www.ci.durham.nh.us/boc\\_planning/mill-plaza-redevelopment-site-plan-cup](https://www.ci.durham.nh.us/boc_planning/mill-plaza-redevelopment-site-plan-cup). Full-size plans are available for review in the Planning Department office.

The applicant has revised the site plans several times since the January 2020 version that the TRG last reviewed:

- Partial revisions were submitted in May 2020. These primarily affected the parking layout and landscaping in response to Planning Board concerns.
- A complete revised set, dated January 20, 2021, was submitted on February 1st. Changes in this set mostly related to grading and drainage changes on the east side of the site between proposed Building C and the boundary with the 19-21 Main Street parcel, and in a smaller area on the southeast portion of the site between Building C and College Brook.

I reviewed the January plan set, met with Rich Reine and April Talon to discuss the issues, and submitted a list of comments and questions to the applicant and the Planning Board on February 18. (Those comments are attached to this memo.) I met with the applicant's engineer last week to review my comments.

- The current plans, responding to many of the comments in my list, were submitted on March 10, 2021, along with a response memo from the applicant's engineer (also attached).

I look forward to reviewing this plan set with you and the applicant's representatives at the TRG meeting next Tuesday. CDA will present the revised plans to the Planning Board at the Board's meeting on March 24.

Mill Plaza Redevelopment  
Comments on 1/2021 revised plan set  
FINAL – 2/17/21

Sheet(s)	Comments
C-102	Signs in parking area medians and end islands – what are these? Are they to restrict parking to Hannaford customers?
C-102, L2.1, ES10.1	Check possible conflicts between signs and light poles (C-102 and ES10.1) with landscaping (L2.1) – note height of proposed plantings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Note height of proposed plantings (e.g., Mountain laurel – 3’-9’ tall)</li> <li>- Provide detail of parking sign showing height</li> </ul>
C-102	Transition from multi use “walkway” to driveway is not safe for cyclists – requires a sharp turn through the accessible ramp and then another sharp turn into the driveway. Two options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide a better transition at the curve by change the sloped granite curb to a flatter ramp</li> <li>or</li> <li>- Widen the “sidewalk” so that the multi-use path continues to Mill Road</li> </ul>
C-102	Interior bike storage area needs details: rack type & layout, capacity
C-102	Pedestrian walkway along Hannaford/Rite Aid frontage: need to demonstrate continuous 5-foot wide (min.) path, unobstructed by ramps, columns, planters, cart storage, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A cart storage management plan may be required to prevent shopping carts from blocking the pedestrian way</li> </ul>
C-102	Building B internal path – show design
C-102, L4.1	Building C, north entrance (next to garage entrance): does the door swing reduce the sidewalk width to less than 4 feet?
C-101, C-102, C-103, L2.0	Proposed limit of work should extend down the bank toward the brook to include buffer restoration/improvement measures
NEW	Add <b>Buffer Improvement Plan</b> showing proposed buffer improvement measures, including (but not necessarily limited to) those measures recommended in the Ballestero report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Removal of invasives (Ballestero p. 3)</li> <li>- Repair drainage features (Ballestero p. 4)</li> <li>- Lay back slope or use reinforced earth (Ballestero p. 6)</li> <li>- Remove rip rap (Ballestero p.7) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Note: this conflicts with “boulders to remain” on C-101</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Items that may require coordination with Rivers Edge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Removal of pedestrian bridge (Ballestero p. 5)</li> <li>o Step pool system (Ballestero p. 8)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Sheet(s)	Comments
C-101, C-102	Proposed limit of work should encompass proposed changes to Mill Road crosswalk
NEW	Add details for Mill Road crosswalk upgrade (and relocation, if applicable) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Include barriers to guide pedestrians if deemed appropriate</li> </ul>
C-102	Confirm that Building C entrances on north and east sides do not need ADA accessible routes
C-103	Grading at new retaining wall (parallel to east boundary) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wall is below existing grade (= adjacent grade to east) north of elev 53, and above existing grade south of elev 53.</li> <li>- Therefore, north of 53 the retaining wall faces west and south of 53 it faces east.</li> <li>- Also, south of about elev 52 the retaining wall appears to be above the adjacent stone wall. Will resulting drainage pattern impact the stone wall?</li> </ul>
C-103, C-102	Address public safety issues at all walls greater than 42" high: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- North of Building C, vinyl coated fence is on top of ledge cut – should it wrap around to the top of retaining wall (about 10 feet high)?</li> <li>- East of Building C, parallel to stone wall – wall is about 9 feet high at its north end (facing Building C), and about 6 feet high near PCB-28 (facing 19-21 Main St)</li> <li>- East of Building C, next to transformers – wall is about 6 feet high</li> </ul>
C-103	Clarify proposed grading and wall height at top of bank (south of Buildings B and C).
C-103	Change proposed 18" HDPE crossing site entrance and entering Town ROW (i.e., between PDMH-8 and PDMH-9) to RCP
C-103	Confirm condition of existing 24" RCP drain line from PDMH-9 to outfall; replace with new 24" RCP if warranted
C-104	New water line across the site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Confirm with DPW whether entire line should be 12" (rather than reducing to 8" for last section near Chesley Drive)</li> <li>- Confirm ownership of the line crossing the site (as distinct from service lines)</li> </ul>
C-503	"Ornamental metal fence" detail – does this apply to the fence above the ledge cut, north of Building C? If not, provide detail of that fence.
C-507	"Retaining wall" detail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A structural plan for each wall will be required prior to the issuance of a building permit</li> <li>- Should the outlet from the 4" perf. drain at the base of the retaining wall be shown on C-103?</li> </ul>

Sheet(s)	Comments
L2.0	“Existing vegetation to remain” in buffer area – no invasives removal or other buffer restoration/improvement?
L2.0	Limit of work line indicates no plan for buffer improvement or regrading
L2.1	Center island “3/L3.0” doesn’t make sense – should be “4/L3.0”?
L3.0	<p>Detail 4 does not propose using structural soil, which was discussed in meetings as a way to ensure better tree health. With islands being only 6 feet wide, a better planting design is needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information on the use of structural soil is available at the website of Cornell University’s Urban Horticulture Institute. See <a href="http://www.hort.cornell.edu/uhi/outreach/csc/graphics.html">http://www.hort.cornell.edu/uhi/outreach/csc/graphics.html</a> .</li> <li>- Attached to this list are a plan view and detail for planting islands, from the Cornell website. It is recommended to overexcavate the tree pits and use structural soil under the parking spaces as shown in these figures.</li> </ul>
L2.1	Trees in the 6-foot planting islands are less than 3 feet from parking spaces and vulnerable to damage from vehicles, particularly pickup trucks (a Ford F-150 XL has a 38” front overhang and 49” rear overhang). Recommend adding bollards or other protection for trees.
L2.1	Empty square in first parking aisle – is something missing, or should the square be deleted?
L2.2	River birch tree adjacent to PCB-28 – too close?
L4.0, L4.1	Path on the east side of building C doesn’t match the site plan – shows old connection to 19-21 Main St parking lot (sheets still have original 1/2/20 date)
NEW	<p>Add <b>Easement Plan</b>, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New easement for street drainage into brook</li> <li>- New easement for water line crossing the site from Mill Road to Chesley Drive</li> <li>- Existing easement for College Brook sewer interceptor (check to make sure that existing easement is in the correct location, and revise if necessary to conform to actual location of the interceptor)</li> </ul>

M1529-002  
March 10, 2021

Rick Taintor, AICP  
Community Planning Consultant  
Town of Durham

Re: **Mill Plaza Redevelopment**  
**Response to Planning Consultant's Review dated February 24th, 2021**

Dear Mr. Taintor,

This letter is in response to comments from the "Comments on 1/20/21 Revised Plan Set", letter dated February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021. The following information is being provided as part of the response to these comments:

- Mill Plaza Redevelopment Site Plans, revised 3/10/2021

The following are responses (in **bold**) to the comments (in *italics*) from the review letter:

1. *C-102: Signs in parking area medians and end islands – what are these? Are they to restrict parking to Hannaford customers?*

**These signs will note that the parking in front of Hannaford is for Hannaford Customers. Final sign details will be coordinated with Hannaford.**

2. *C-102, L2.1, ES10.1: Check possible conflicts between signs and light poles (C-102 and ES10.1) with landscaping (L2.1) – note height of proposed plantings.*
  - a. *Note height of proposed plantings (e.g., Mountain laurel – 3'-9' tall)*
  - b. *Provide detail of parking sign showing height*

**A check for potential conflicts between light poles, signs, and landscaping has been performed. The height and width of plant material is noted in the plant schedule along with additional clarification notes.**

**A detail for parking signs can be found on Sheet C-503, Sign Legend & Sign Post.**

3. *C-102: Transition from multi use "walkway" to driveway is not safe for cyclists – requires a sharp turn through the accessible ramp and then another sharp turn into the driveway. Two options:*
  - a. *Provide a better transition at the curve by change the sloped granite curb to a flatter ramp*
  - b. *Widen the "sidewalk" so that the multi-use path continues to Mill Road*

**The sidewalk has been revised to include a section of flush granite curb and two inline tip-down ramps to facilitate a smoother transition.**

4. *C-102: Interior bike storage area needs details: rack type & layout, capacity*

**The interior bike storage will provide storage for a minimum of 40 bicycles.**



5. C-102: Pedestrian walkway along Hannaford/Rite Aid frontage: need to demonstrate continuous 5-foot wide (min.) path, unobstructed by ramps, columns, planters, cart storage, etc.
  - a. A cart storage management plan may be required to prevent shopping carts from blocking the pedestrian way

**The site plan has been revised to show all proposed columns to ensure a minimum 5' wide unobstructed path.**

6. C-102: Building B internal path – show design

**The text has been adjusted to show the internal layout.**

7. C-102, L4.1: Building C, north entrance (next to garage entrance): Does the door swing reduce the sidewalk width to less than 4 feet?

**With the door open there is greater than 4' of clearance between the door and edge of sidewalk.**

8. C-101, C-102, C-103, L2.0: Proposed limit of work should extend down the bank toward the brook to include buffer restoration/improvement measures

**The limit of work has been adjusted.**

9. NEW: Add a Buffer Improvement Plan showing proposed buffer improvement measures, including (but not necessarily limited to) those measures recommended in the Ballesterio report:
  - a. Removal of invasives (Ballesterio p. 3)
  - b. Repair drainage features (Ballesterio p. 4)
  - c. Lay back slope or use reinforced earth (Ballesterio p. 6)
  - d. Remove rip rap (Ballesterio p.7)
    - i. Note: this conflicts with "boulders to remain" on C-101
  - e. Items that may require coordination with Rivers Edge
    - i. Removal of pedestrian bridge (Ballesterio p. 5)
    - ii. Step pool system (Ballesterio p. 8)

**See attached Buffer Improvement Plan. Note that items c, d, and e (noted above) are not part of the Wetland Buffer Improvement plan. As stated at the January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Planning Board meeting a \$25,000 contribution from Colonial Durham Associates will be made to the Town for use towards future improvements that require coordination with abutting property owners and/or wetland impacts along College Brook.**

10. C-102: Confirm that Building C entrances on north and east sides do not need ADA accessible routes

**The project Architect has confirmed that only the entrances to the residential lobbies and elevators require ADA access.**

11. C-103: Grading at new retaining wall (parallel to east boundary)
  - a. Wall is below existing grade (= adjacent grade to east) north of elev. 53, and above existing grade south of elev 53.
  - b. Therefore, north of 52 the retaining wall faces west and south of 53 it faces east.

- c. *Also, south of about elev 52 the retaining wall appears to be above the adjacent stone wall. Will resulting drainage pattern impact the stone wall?*

**The grading and wall layout has been revised to show the break in the wall.**

- 12. C-103, C-102: *Address public safety issues at all walls greater than 42" high:*
  - a. *North of Building C, vinyl coated fence is on top of ledge cut – should it wrap around to the top of retaining wall (about 10 feet high)?*
  - b. *East of Building C, parallel to stone wall – wall is about 9' high at its north end (facing Building C), and about 6 feet high near PCB-28 (facing 19-21 Main St)*
  - c. *East of Building C, next to transformers – wall is about 6 feet high*

**The vinyl coated fence will terminate both ends at the proposed retaining walls as shown on Sheet C-102. The proposed retaining walls will have a fence installed into the top block/cap as shown on the Retaining Wall detail on Sheet C-507.**

- 13. C-103: *Clarify proposed grading and wall height at top of bank (south of Buildings B and C)*

**Additional spot grades have been added to the grading plan.**

- 14. C-103 *Change proposed 18" HDPE crossing site entrance and entering Town ROW (i.e., between PDMH-8 and PDMH-9) to RCP*

**The pipe has been revised to RCP.**

- 15. C-103: *Confirm condition of existing 24" RCP drain line from PDMH-9 to outfall; replace with new 24" RCP if warranted*

**The pipe will be inspected prior to construction and condition reported to the engineer and Town.**

- 16. C-104 *New water line across site*
  - a. *Confirm with DPW whether entire line should be 12" (rather than reducing to 8' for last section near Chesley Drive)*
  - b. *Confirm ownership of the line crossing the site (as distinct from service lines)*

**The size of the proposed water main and ownership will be confirmed with the DPW.**

- 17. C-503: *"Ornamental metal fence" detail – does this apply to the fence above the ledge cut, north of Building C? If not, provide detail of that fence.*

**The retaining wall text callouts have been revised on the site plan to clarify what type of fence is to be installed. A chain link fence detail has been added on Sheet C-503.**

- 18. C-507: *"Retaining wall" detail*
  - a. *A structural plan for each wall will be required prior to the issuance of a building permit*
  - b. *Should the outlet from the 4" perf. drain at the base of the retaining wall be shown on C-103?*

**Noted. The final outlet of the 4" perforated underdrain will be coordinated prior to construction once the final design details of the retaining wall are complete.**

19. L2.0: "Existing vegetation to remain" in buffer area – no invasive removal or other buffer restoration/improvement?

**The note has been removed. See attached Buffer Restoration Plan.**

20. L2.0: Limit of work line indicated no plan for buffer improvement or regrading

**The limit of work has been adjusted.**

21. L2.1: Center island "3/L3.0" doesn't make sense – should be "4/L3.0"?

**The detail tag has been revised to reference Detail 4 on Sheet L3.0.**

22. L3.0: Detail 4 does not propose using structural soil, which was discussed in meetings as a way to ensure better tree health. With islands being only 6 feet wide, a better planning design is needed.

- a. Information on the use of structural soil is available at the website of Cornell University's Urban Horticulture Institute. See <http://www.hort.cornell.edu/uhi/outreach/csc/graphics.html>
- b. Attached to this list (page 8) are a plan view and detail for planting islands, from the Cornell website. It is recommended to overexcavate the tree pits and use structural soil under the parking spaces as shown in these figures (8' outside the curb).

**The detail has been revised to show dimensions of soil volume to support long-term tree health. The soil has been noted as "Engineered soil" in-lieu of the term structural soil as the landscape architect believes this type of soil will provide a better medium for the growth and health of the street trees than structural soil.**

23. L2.1: Trees in the 6-foot planting islands are less than 3 feet from parking spaces and vulnerable to damage from vehicles, particularly pickup trucks (a Ford F-150 XL has a 38" front overhang and 49" rear overhang). Recommend adding bollards or other protection for trees.

**Locations of the proposed trees have been strategically placed in between parking stalls (centered on parking striping) to mitigate potential impact from vehicles with larger than standard overhangs.**

24. L2.1: Empty square in first parking aisle – is something missing, or should the square be deleted?

**The plan has been revised.**

25. L2.2: River birch tree adjacent to PCB-28 – too close?

**The proposed tree locations have been reviewed and adjustments made to increase the distance from PCB-28 (now PCB-25) and trees while maintaining the needed vegetative screen along the property line.**



26. L4.0, L4.1: Path on the east side of Building C doesn't match the site plan – shows old connection to 19-21 Main St parking lot (sheets still have original 1/2/20 date)

**The plans have been updated to match the site plan.**

27. NEW: Add an Easement Plan, including:

- a. New easement for street drainage into brook
- b. New easement for water line crossing the site from Mill Road to Chesley Drive
- c. Existing easement for College Brook sewer interceptor (check to make sure that existing easement is in the correct location, and revise if necessary to conform to actual location of the interceptor)

**A conceptual Easement Plan has been included with this submission.**

If you have any questions or need any additional information, please do not hesitate to call me at 603-433-8818 or email me at [jmpersechino@tighebond.com](mailto:jmpersechino@tighebond.com).

Very truly yours,

**TIGHE & BOND, INC.**



Joseph Persechino, PE  
Vice President

Enclosures