



## PLANNING DEPARTMENT

### Town of Durham

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### **Planning Consultant's Review**

#### **Planning Board Meeting – Wednesday, January 22, 2020**

- XI. ***Public Hearing - Mill Plaza Redevelopment***, 7 Mill Road. 1) Site plan review and 2) Conditional Use for mixed use and activity within the wetland and shoreland overlay districts. Colonial Durham Associates, LP, property owner. Sean McCauley, agent. Joe Persechino, Tighe & Bond, engineer. Steve Cecil and Emily Innes, Harriman, site planner. Ari Pollack, attorney. Rick Taintor, Town's Contract Planner. Central Business District. Map 5, Lot 1-1.
- I recommend that the Board reopen the public hearing and vote to continue it to a date certain in February 2020.

Please note the following:

- 1) On November 13, 2019, the Planning Board held a public hearing on a revised "Conceptual Site Plan" for the Mill Plaza redevelopment project. On January 2, 2020, Colonial Durham Associates submitted a complete revised application based on that conceptual plan.
- 2) The revised site plan shows a proposed parking lot on the adjacent parcel owned by Peter Murphy (Toomerfs LLC) with a pedestrian-only connection to the Mill Plaza site. This off-site parking lot is technically not part of Colonial Durham's application for site plan approval, and is instead the subject of a separate application for design review that is also on the agenda for this meeting. Nevertheless, there is an explicit connection between the two projects, which is spelled out in two ways.

First, the site plan claims 581 parking spaces, including 424 on-site places to serve commercial uses and 157 off-site spaces to serve residential uses. The site plan states that "157 of the surface parking spaces are proposed to be leased from the adjacent parcels (Tax Map 5, Lots 1-15 and 1-16)." (Note that the Toomerfs parking lot project was the subject of a public hearing for preliminary design review and conditional use at the Board's January 8 meeting, but a site plan for this project has not yet been submitted.)

Evidence that the proposed parking directly adjacent to the residential building (the "New Parking Area") will be controlled and made a part of the Durham Plaza through the full available term of the Hannaford lease 12/31/2059, with ongoing full access to the proposed residential building. All loading, parking and other activities related to the residential building would be serviced by the New Parking Area.

3) In terms of physical layout (as opposed to residential density), the key changes to the Mill Plaza Redevelopment project are in the middle of the site, centered on proposed building “B”. The following images show this area in the 9/14/2018 plan (left) and the 10/22/2019 plan (right).



Some changes from the 2018 site plan to the new plan include the following:

- The 2018 plan included two buildings (designated as C1 and C2) that were joined into what would look like a single L-shaped building wrapping around the third proposed building (designated as B). In the new plan, building C1 has been eliminated and building B has been shifted northward.
  - The 2018 plan proposed a continuous street and pedestrian route through the site, extending from the front of the Hannaford building across the front of building C1, and then wrapping around building B. In the new plan, that street and pedestrian route are eliminated as a result of removing building C1 and shifting building B to the north. The pedestrian route through the site is now proposed to be accommodated by providing a wide corridor bisecting building B.
  - The reconfiguration of the proposed buildings results in a reduction in overall building coverage and an increase in the total area of parking spaces. Compared to the 2018 plan, the new plan increases the total number of on-site parking spaces from 363 to 424 (+61, or 17%), and the number of on-site surface spaces from 263 to 340 (+77, or 29%). This increase in the proposed on-site parking supply is accompanied by a reduction in potential parking demand due to a 22% decrease in the number of proposed beds (from 330 to 258).
  - In order to compensate (in part) for the reduction in building footprints, building B is now proposed to be four stories tall rather than three stories.
- 4) The Technical Review Group reviewed the Conceptual Site Plan at its meeting on January 14, 2020. TRG members had several comments and questions regarding site details, including structural capacity of the underground detention system and plans for snow plowing, storage and removal. However, the bulk of the discussion focused on the significant changes from the 2018 plan, including the shifting of building B to the north and the resulting elimination of an internal street. A concern was expressed about the degradation of the pedestrian circulation, streetscape and sense of place. TRG members and the applicant's representatives discussed various approaches to improve the plan but no solution was identified that would meet the needs of the applicant.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Taintor, AICP  
Community Planning Consultant  
January 16, 2020