

## PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Town of Durham

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

#### **Planning Board Meeting – Wednesday, August 25, 2021**

VIII. **Public Hearing - Mill Plaza Redevelopment**, 7 Mill Road. Continued review of application for site plan and conditional use for mixed use redevelopment project, drive-through facility for bank, and activity within the wetland and shoreland overlay districts. Colonial Durham Associates, property owner. Sean McCauley, agent. Joe Persechino, Tighe & Bond, engineer. Emily Innes and Sharon Ames, Harriman, project designer. Ari Pollack, attorney. (Rick Taintor is serving as the 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 the hearing to a date to be determined.

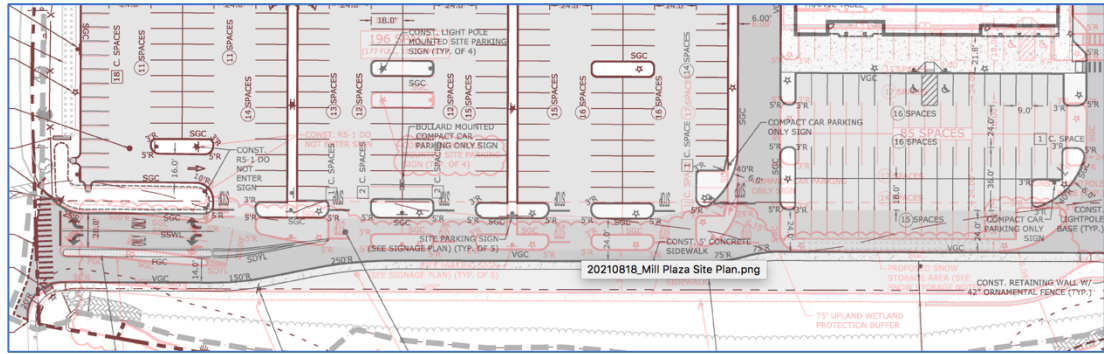
Please note the following:

- 1) Recap of previous meeting: On May 19, 2021, the Planning Board opened the continued public hearing on the revised Site Plan for the Mill Plaza redevelopment project. The applicant stated that the plans before the Board (submitted on March 10, 2021) represented the best that could be done with respect to the buffer area and other concerns, and requested that the public hearing be closed and that the application be approved with conditions, including those recommended by the Traffic Safety Committee.

There was extensive public comment lasting approximately 1½ hours, all of which was in opposition to the proposed redevelopment plan. Issues raised by residents included wetland buffer impacts, pedestrian impacts, impacts on neighboring residential properties, lack of consistency with prior planning (including the 2009 Durham Commercial Core Strategic Plan and the 2007-2008 Town Center Study), and lack of consistency with the character of the central business district.

Following public comment and discussion by Board members, the applicant asked the Board to continue the hearing in order to allow one more look at the options for addressing community concerns. The Board voted to continue the hearing to June 23, 2021. The applicant subsequently requested that the hearing be further postponed to July 28, 2021 and then to August 25, 2021.





### 3) Topics for August 25 meeting:

- The applicant has submitted the two revised plan sheets in order to get feedback from the Board prior to preparing a complete plan submittal including updated landscape, utilities, grading and drainage, and architectural plans. Therefore, it would be appropriate for Board members to discuss whether they feel that the changes in the revised plans are sufficient to justify the applicant moving forward with detailed engineering, landscape and architectural adjustments. I recommend that this be the initial topic of discussion after public comment. If there is a clear direction from this discussion, the Board could then request me to prepare a draft notice of decision, either to approve or deny the applications.
- The Board has previously discussed, and indicated informal support for, waivers from three provisions of the site plan regulations: (1) the requirement for foundation planting strips along the fronts and sides of Buildings B and C that face parking lots or driveways; (2) the maximum number of parking spaces between landscaped median strips or islands; and (3) certain aspects of architectural design. The revised Site Plan may require an additional waiver due to the lack of a landscaped island separating a row of parking spaces from the vehicular circulation route. Any other requested or required waivers should be identified, and the Board should take a formal vote on all waivers prior to requesting submission of a complete plan set.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Taintor, AICP  
Community Planning Consultant  
August 19, 2021