



TOWN OF DURHAM
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Town Planner's Project Review
Wednesday, November 14, 2018

- X. **Hotel – Hetzel and Alexander.** Main Street and Mill Road on UNH Campus. Conceptual site plan on 1.35 acres. The hotel would incorporate the existing Hetzel Hall (the north, east, and west facades would be retained and restored) and a new addition (Alexander Hall would be demolished). Existing surface parking to the south would be used and a one level parking deck might be added. Elliott Sidewalk Communities LLC, Sparks, Maryland, c/o Tim Elliott, applicant. University of New Hampshire, c/o David May, property owner. Map 13, Lot 7-3UNH. Residence A District.
- I recommend discussion and closing the conceptual review.

Please note the following:

- 1) **Conceptual review.** The application is submitted for a preliminary conceptual review. A conceptual review does not involve any notices or public hearing. It is usually completed in one meeting, though it may be continued if the applicant and board think useful. There is no need for a site walk unless the project will be continued to another meeting. Interested parties may submit comments in writing and speak at the meeting in the public comments time. The applicant said that he will likely submit a design review application afterwards, which would involve a more detailed presentation and review.
- 2) **Project.** The site is at the corner of Main Street and Mill Road on the UNH campus. The front and side walls (from Main Street) of Hetzel Hall will be retained and restored and an addition will be built in the rear. Alexander Hall will be demolished. Happily, the view toward Hetzel Hall on three sides will be retained as Hetzel Hall is surely considered an architecturally significant building. The trio of Hetzel, Fairchild, and Huddleston Halls lining Main Street at the entrance to the downtown is one of the iconic images of the university.
- 3) **UNH property.** The project will be located on UNH property. UNH will not subdivide the land but will likely lease a specific area to the applicant. The subject area is about 1.5 acres. The applicant will build the project. It will be clarified whether the applicant will own the building or lease it long term. As a private project, the project is subject to Town regulations and Town review. The building will be fully taxable. According to the Town Assessor, the land (specific area supporting the project) will also be fully taxable. The applicant is still working out the arrangement with UNH but he has the permission of UNH to submit this conceptual application.

- 4) Variance. This section of UNH is zoned Residence A. This zone does not allow a hotel. The applicant applied for and received variances to build a hotel and a parking lot or parking structure on the property. The applicant will apply for additional variances in the near future for any other limiting zoning parameters, including building height and probably impervious surface. All necessary variances would be required prior to the Planning Board accepting a formal application.
- 5) Hotel. The hotel will be privately owned and operated but the applicant said he would like to work with the UNH hospitality program.
- 6) Building. There will be four floors in the Hetzel Hall portion with a restaurant on the first floor and hotel rooms on the upper three floors. There will be five floors in the addition with reception on the first floor, a lounge on the second floor, and hotel rooms on the third, fourth, and fifth floors. The ground floor of the addition will be lower than the ground floor of Hetzel (hence 5 and 4 floors, respectively)
- 7) Parking. The applicant is discussing the existing Campus Crossing parking lot (formerly C lot) situated to the south of the hotel, for use by the hotel, and possibly adding one new parking level over the existing parking lot.
- 8) Technical Review Group. The project was presented to the TRG on November 6.
- 9) Fire Department. It will need to be determined whether the Town fire department or state fire marshal reviews the project but we believe at this point it is considered a Town project in all respects.
- 10) Building Department. Audrey Cline noted that there are some challenges under the building code with constructing a five story building.
- 11) Police Department. Chief Kurz noted the following in a memo to the Planning Board:
 - Of interesting note for the Police Department is the overall policing responsibility. If the property remains under control of UNH, then UNH Police would have oversight. If the entity is taxable to the Town of Durham then Durham Police would have that responsibility. While not an issue to adversely impact the facility, an MOU would need to be implemented.
 - The facility is proposing to build a parking lot with a deck overhead. The Town should urge discussions about a private/public partnership in the construction of a parking garage that would provide spaces for business employees of the downtown. These parkers would vacate the facility in the evening allowing for event parking at the hotel. The arrangement warrants additional discussions.
 - The Police Department is very impressed with the initial conceptual plans and looks forward to welcoming an additional hotel into the community
- 12) Architecture. The Town's architectural regulations will not apply to this project as it is not located in one of the five core commercial zones. However, all site plan applicants must submit full architectural plans and the Planning Board, staff, and public may offer

comments. Of course, high quality architectural design will be critical to the success of this project and its reception in the community. The applicant has stated that he will certainly listen to any comments from the Town. The design will need to be approved by UNH. I will coordinate with the applicant and Doug Bencks, UNH Campus Architect. Generally, in my experience, the goal for an addition to a historic building is that the addition be reflective of and harmonious with the existing Hetzel Hall (in terms of materials, scale, form, details, etc.). It should neither simply mimic the design of Hetzel nor should it be dramatically different (with some exceptions). One hopes for an addition which is fine and attractive in itself, where there is an appealing “dialogue” between the new and the old.

- 13) Pedestrian connections. Establishing and maintaining attractive pedestrian connections between the hotel and Mill Plaza, Main Street in general, 66 Main Street which is also being developed by the applicant and the interior UNH campus will be important.
- 14) Other issues. The range of issues related to stormwater management, parking, traffic flow, solid waste, utilities, emergency services, landscaping, lighting, etc. will be discussed more as the plans develop.

Hetzel Hall is shown in the foreground. Alexander Hall is located behind Hetzel and to the left. An aerial view is shown on the following page.



Aerial view

