



TOWN OF DURHAM
8 NEWMARKET RD
DURHAM, NH 03824-2898
603/868-8064
www.ci.durham.nh.us

Town Planner's Project Review
Wednesday, November 13, 2019

- X. **19-21 Main Street – Parking Lot.** Preliminary design review for site plan and conditional use for parking lot on four lots and reconfiguration of the entrance. Three options are presented with variations in layout and the number of spaces. The owner is in discussions with Colonial Durham Associates for a possible parking arrangement for Mill Plaza. Toomerphs, LLC c/o Pete Murphy, property owner. Mike Sievert, engineer. Map 5, Lots 1-9, 1-10, 1-15, and 1-16. Church Hill District.
- I recommend that the board accept the design review application, discuss the project, and set a public hearing for December 11.

Please note the following:

- 1) **Acceptance.** Section 1.2.7 of the Site Plan Regulations, Part II, specifies that the Planning Board determine sufficient items have been met under the design review process. I believe the requirement is met per the submission and follow up email from Mike Sievert. This “acceptance” is different from the acceptance of a formal application where the application is determined to be complete.
- 2) **Conditional Use.** The proposal is for a parking lot as a principal use (not an accessory use serving only the on-site uses. This is allowed by conditional use. The board may set any appropriate conditions on the proposed use of the parking lot. Potential users should be discussed in detail.
- 3) **Technical Review Group.** The applicant met with the TRG on November 5. The minutes will be forwarded shortly. The Police Chief has submitted a memo on the project.
- 4) **Mill Plaza.** This project is related to Mill Plaza as discussed in both applications.
- 5) **Public comments.** The public may submit comments in writing now and may speak to this project under Public Comments at the November 13 meeting. A public hearing will likely be scheduled for December 11. Comments made at the November 13 meeting during the Mill Plaza public hearing should be limited to the proposed parking lot's relationship to Mill Plaza unless the Planning Board specifies otherwise.

- 6) Cross section. Mike Sievert will submit a longitudinal cross section of the site from Main Street toward the rear of the parcel (and preferably beyond) to give a sense of the existing and finished grades. The elevation drops off dramatically from Main Street so the grading plan will be important. Will there be a retaining wall at the rear of the parcel?
- 7) Visibility. We will need more information to see how visible the parking lot would be from neighboring residences. It should be screened/buffered from those properties. What kind of buffering should be included between this site and Mill Plaza and the Durham Community Church?
- 8) Historic District. The front two lots are located in the Durham Historic District. An application (whether regular or preliminary) will be submitted to the HDC at the appropriate time.
- 9) Front entrance. The applicant proposes to reconfigure the existing access points on the two front lots. The proposal includes a boulevard type entrance with a generous landscaped median and relocating all of the parking areas there to the rear. This is a very positive proposal. The design for the boulevard will need to be optimized (as depicted in a cross section) in terms of maximizing width of the median, maximizing distance of the driveways from the two adjacent buildings, allowing for the minimum acceptable width of the entrance and exit driveways including any turning radii, and determining grades as 21 Main Street is considerably lower than 19 Main Street. This redesign is part of the HDC's purview as well.
- 10) Traffic impact. The proposal is that all of the access to the lot be from Main Street near the top of Church Hill. This is a dense area in the heart of the Historic District. A traffic study and possibly use of the Durham traffic model should be done to determine if the amount and type of traffic likely to be generated is acceptable. If the parking lot is primarily for storage of vehicles to students and others renting apartments at Mill Plaza arguably there would be significantly less use of vehicles on a daily basis.
- 11) Setbacks. The side setback for a parking lot is 5 feet. The rear setback is 15 feet.
- 12) Permeable pavement. Use of permeable pavement should be explored. The maximum impervious surface for the lot/site is 80%.
- 13) Four Lots. It is likely that the four lots would need to be combined to accommodate the proposal. Lot 1-9 contains a multiunit building and a driveway. Lot 1-10 known as the Red Tower is a multiunit building. Lot 1-15 contains two buildings. Pete Murphy says the building in front, which he referred to as the "billiard building" and which appears to be a significant building, would remain. The ranch-type building in the rear would be demolished. Lot 1-16 is vacant except for the parking area that extends onto it.

- 14) Abutters. Lot 1-12 to the east is owned by Bill Hall. Lot 1-13 to the east is owned by Michael Urso. Lot 7-59 to the south is owned by the Andersen Williams Group (Peter Andersen). Mill Plaza is situated to the west.
- 15) Parking deck. There was some discussion at the TRG about the idea of adding a parking deck. Hypothetically, a driveway could be extended from Mill Plaza to the site (though no vehicular connection is proposed in the Mill Plaza project) allowing for one level of parking at grade. The access from Main Street could lead to an elevated deck (parking structure) for a second level. This could be built without a ramp connecting the two levels reducing cost and adding capacity. Such a structure would be more expensive and have a higher impact upon the land and potentially upon neighboring property. It is worthy of exploration though given the need for parking to serve the downtown. However, note that a parking structure is not allowed in the Church Hill district so some zoning relief would be required if this option were to be pursued.
- 16) Stormwater management. A plan will be submitted in accordance with strict standards specified in the Site Plan Regulations as the project takes shape. Of course, this will be an integral aspect of the project. John Meyrowitz, a neighbor to the south on Chesley Drive, has provided information about ongoing flooding of College Brook below this project (which should not be exacerbated by this project and perhaps could be mitigated).
- 17) Landscaping. Other than landscaping serving to buffer the parking lot along the perimeter parking lots located at the rear of sites are exempt from most landscaping requirements (because applicants are encouraged to located parking in the rear).
- 18) Lighting. Information on lighting, if any is proposed, will be submitted later. All lighting fixtures must be fully shielded but the amount of light for the parking lot and hours when the lighting will be on will be a critical issue in terms of impacts on neighboring properties.
- 19) Snow storage. This important issue will be addressed later. Removal of snow from the site may be needed in the case of significant snow events. The plan will need to demonstrate that properties downgradient will not be adversely impacted.
- 20) Other issues. There are numerous other issues that will be examined later: bicycle parking, potential for one or more electric charging stations, accessible spaces, signage, curbing if needed, pedestrian access through the lot and to Main Street and Mill Plaza. Abutter Bill Hall told me there is a sewer line on the subject lot that will need to be shown and planned around. The design engineer is aware of this structure.

(See map on next page. The lot lines are off and should be shifted up and to the right.)

