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Durham, New Hampshire is a place near and dear to my heart. As a 2005 graduate of the University of New Hampshire and the proud father of a (hopeful) future Wildcat, I have spent much time in the community as I grew in my life, just as it has grown. In many ways, the coffeeshop in the center of town, Breaking New Grounds, was an inspiration for a 15-year adventure I would find myself on with the establishment of what would become Adelle's Coffeehouse, which I opened in nearby downtown Dover, NH in 2008 and ran with the help of a business partner for 15 years until we sold it just last year. This, coupled with my professional work in public administration and the coursework in the MPA program, sets the stage as I approach this report on addressing revitalization issues in Downtown Durham.

Background

Durham, NH is, in many ways, the quintessential New England town. Its population is 15,490 according to the 2020 census and it is the home of the University of New Hampshire (UNH) which boasts a student population of over 15,000 (U.S. Census, 2021). As a part of this, the town is impacted by the university through both the students that live on- and off-campus within the town, and also by commuter students that may live in surrounding towns and commute onto campus to attend classes. Of course, there are also the innumerable employees and support staff of the university and related establishments and institutions that interact with the town in various ways throughout the year. The point being in all this is that the Town of Durham, NH with its planning, infrastructure and development priorities, cannot be extricated from that of the University.

Durham was first incorporated in 1732. It uses an Administrator and Council form of government with Todd Selig having served as the Town Administrator since 2001. In this role, Mr. Selig carries out and administers the policies that are developed by the 9-member Town Council (Durham NH. Administration, 2024). The Town of Durham also has within its structure a Planning Department run by Michael Behrendt. In his capacity, Mr. Behrendt seeks to manage development within the town as expressed in the Town's Master Plan, in line with Town Council goals and towards a variety of goals that have been established to those ends (Durham NH. Planning Department, 2024). For background, in 2015 the Town issued its most recent Master Plan following years of work that began with a visioning session in January of 2011. Within this report, the stakeholders involved in the project put forth ideas, goals and recommendations that fall in line with broad concepts that are designed to enhance and model what the community can, and should, be (Durham, NH. Master Plan 2015).

The findings of note within the Master Plan include a strong preference and emphasis on a number of key economic development strategies to build on, including what I would categorize as an interest in *Smart Growth Principles, A Focus on Historic and Quality Design Standards, Industry Clusters, A Focus on the Arts, Buy Local Principles, and Social and Environmental Emphases* throughout. Town-Gown interaction and relations are also a common theme (Durham, NH. Master Plan 2015).

We will turn now to review some of the ways in which economic revitalization and development may be supported and ultimately realized in the Town, specifically within downtown in the context of that Town-Gown arrangement. Town-Gown arrangements refer to the relationship, and sometimes benefit or tension, of a community that serves as a home to a college or university (Massey, 2014). Town-Gown arrangements can run the gamut from large universities being located in small towns to the opposite, small colleges in large cities. The importance is that there is a relationship that must be considered in all regards; sometimes it is co-beneficial and sometimes the parties may be at odds. Regardless, both sides are necessarily affected by one another. In Durham's case, the physical proximity of the university and downtown is both an asset and liability depending on the situation.

Intertwined in this section, we will hit on some related, alternative and emerging strategies in the field of economic revitalization that Durham may want to keep in mind as it navigates the priorities that it has identified in the 2015 Master Plan. It should consider this research as it moves forward to build on the issues identified and navigate the associated obstacles, using the lessons learned from other communities as valuable insight. As I prepared for this, I conducted a literature review of topics that included economic revitalization of college towns, economic revitalization in a small town more broadly, and conducted New Hampshire specific research intended to tie all of the above together.

Development Opportunities: In the Current Vision and Beyond

Efforts to revitalize and foster further economic development are nothing new when it comes to small towns. In fact, it can be seen as a primary objective for local governments. Robert Shively states "city government has always had a role in economic development" and that in recent years many communities have even gotten involved in "marketing the community" in a sense, underscoring the importance of economic development in how a town is managed (Shively, 1997). Given this, one can see the concepts that are explored in the master plan as both providing a framework to build development prospects on and perpetuating what it is to be uniquely that community.

Smart Growth Principles

Smart growth strategies can be seen as development tools that "aspire to promote different types of development more closely aligned with sustainable development" than those traditional efforts focused solely on traditional markers of economic development (Krueger, 2007). They can also be seen as a means by which to elevate certain community quality of life issues and effectively "link" them with other priorities such as economic development in an effort to introduce humanity into a town's growth (Show, et al., 2023). Durham's interest in this can clearly be seen in the 2015 Master Plan.

One can see this with the emphasis throughout the plan on transportation, clearly a hot topic in any downtown setting, but particularly one in the case of Durham with its downtown as densely settled as it is. It is apparent here that the traffic flow is of concern for the community not only from a congestion and traffic planning perspective but it also holds weight with aesthetic importance. To address this, Durham may be interested in concepts that have been deployed in other communities that have really driven the focus of the streetscape to that of the pedestrian over the motorized vehicle.

Take the City of Concord, NH for example. In 2016, this community located only 35 miles from Durham, broadened its sidewalks, installed "bump outs" at intersections and reduced the number of traffic lanes along the main street. This effort, which dramatically changed the streetscape by narrowing the

roadway from a 4-lane design to a 2-lane design helped spark a revitalization of its main street that has been heralded as “overwhelmingly successful” in transforming the main street with increased activity and vibrancy (City of Concord, NH Main Street Design Guide, 2018).

What this represents to the community can not be understated. Concord has seen significant decreases in the number of vacant storefronts and increases in the numbers of restaurants located downtown in the years since the redevelopment project (MacDougall, 2023). All of these improvements feed into creating what can be seen as a more diversified, and resilient, downtown economy. Restaurants and cafes can take advantage of this by investing in outdoor dining, which only further perpetuates and bolsters goals as identified by the community. From the City’s perspective, it was reported that while there was a cost to local taxpayers for a share of the redevelopment, it was well worth the investment in terms of increased property values and in turn, property tax revenues (MacDougall, 2023).

Parking is another perennial issue that dovetails into the conversation on traffic patterns and streetscapes. In the 2015 Master Plan, it is stated that parking “has long been and will continue to be” a challenge for Durham (Durham, NH. Master Plan 2015). This is because it can be a double edge sword for both residents and businesses alike; reduced parking lots in the center of town will contribute positively to the walkability and aesthetic appeal of the downtown, but the merchants located in that core depend on an adequate parking supply for their customers to be able to conveniently access their businesses.

A smart growth principle that can be used in the planning process that should be considered by town officials is the idea which Wilm Wiewel and Gerrit Knaap refer to as using community-based research that is done in collaboration WITH the university as a starting point. In their work, they have found that this provides Town-Gown planning efforts with a shared perspective, more likely contributing to success by “incorporating stakeholder input in research design, accepting that problems typically are more complex than they appear, and accepting that time is required to build trust” (Wiewel and Knapp, 2005). Perhaps the next Master Plan could be a collaborative project between the Town and the university as they suggest.

What is particularly ideal about smart growth strategies broadly is that they perfectly fit into what has been already identified as priorities by the Town. To see this, one only needs to look at the Goals included in the report. They include; “modify the zoning ordinance to encourage multi-story buildings that make more efficient use of sites with a smaller footprint than the historic sprawling design that covers more surface area and consists of only one or two stories” which is representative of a smart growth initiative in its most classic sense (Durham, NH. Master Plan 2015).

This is not to say, of course, that smart growth initiatives can, or even should be, the only solution for Durham’s redevelopment efforts. In fact, words of caution can be found in the literature which may serve as a warning to town officials. As Rob Krueger states, smart growth strategies must be used with policies in place to “protect those who are marginalized by changes in their environment” through gentrification for example (Krueger, 2007). Durham would do well to be mindful in continuing to strike a balance with smart growth amid other identified development strategies.

Historic and Quality Design Standards

The 2015 Master Plan also highlights the importance to the town of maintaining its historic and small town, built character. In fact, it was found that 86% of respondents identified maintaining Durham's small New England town character as important in making Durham a place where they would want to live in the next 10 to twenty years. Further, a full 71% of people specifically noted that maintain the traditional historic architectural character was important for the same reason (Durham, NH, Master Plan 2015).

Building on this, research suggests that historic and quality design standards can, in fact, be used to move a town forward in redevelopment efforts. One way to do this is by leveraging and propagating a sense of the local heritage in new building projects, in this case traditional New England village design. This can be done in an effort to bolster "employment and sustainable economic development" by building on what is already in place. Specifically, it is found that the "evidence shows that there is a correlation between projects aiming at regenerating historic city cores and underutilized land and a city's ability to attract talent and business investment" which is something Durham would be eager to see in new projects (Licciardi and Amirtahmasebi, 2012).

Historic preservation of a place's built-environment on the other hand, which is similar to design standards aimed at maintaining the "sense" of a historic place but comes with much more rigor and certain formalities, may be another key to Durham's revitalization. Historic preservation can be done through a number of mechanisms. This can include the establishment of so-called "historic districts" which may put certain restrictions on the renovation of properties within a certain bound in an effort to maintain the character of such a place ostensibly to drive tourism based on cultural heritage (Miloud and Hugo, 2024).

One such New Hampshire community, Portsmouth, shines as an example of a town that has leaned into historic preservation that Durham may want to consider looking into. In their case, they have even gone so far as having their downtown historic district recognized and listed on the National Register of Historic Places which further encourages preservation by allowing for federal tax credits for qualified rehabilitation expenses (City of Portsmouth NH, Historic Preservation, 2024). While recognizing that Durham may be a smaller town than Portsmouth is, there are some historic properties within the downtown that the town may be able to leverage in this regard.

Industry Clusters

Another concept that can be bolstered is a clear commitment to promoting economic development and revitalization by building off the synergy that exists amongst businesses and institutions. Kayanan et al., refer to this as the development of "innovation districts". Innovation districts can be harnessed by "focusing on placemaking and the types of amenities that appeal specifically to knowledge workers and firms" through various means including district specific amenities such as the installation of electric car charging stations (Kayanan et al, 2022).

The strength that Durham has in this regard is likely even beyond what other towns have because of the Town-Gown relationship with the university. The university may be willing or able to move or co-locate complimentary Departments or functions in and around the downtown core in an effort to realize those public-private synergistic opportunities. In some ways, the location of the UNH Interoperability Lab

within the Madbury Commons Development in Durham may be the opportunity to create an example of this. Perhaps with further zoning changes, other organizations that cater to technology firms like the Interoperability lab can see the benefits of co-locating in adjacent properties.

A Focus on the Arts

Among other things, Durham is undoubtedly an arts focused community. There are active arts organizations such as Amare Cantare and the Mill Pond Center for the Arts, and the university itself has at least a dozen undergraduate majors and minors which fall into an arts category. One strategy for leveraging this in the context of economic revitalization is developing an area's "artistic distinction" in an effort to promote increased patronage and attractiveness of a community (Currid, 2010).

While what this may look like can vary by the form of expression popular in a given locale or an artist's interests, as Currid points out, people like to live in and around districts that have leaned into an arts scene and people will pay a premium for that causing real estate prices to "inevitably rise" resulting in increased property values for property owners and tax revenues for the local government (Currid, 2010). Many cities have pivoted into this by establishing local ordinances that allow for murals to be painted on building facades and other structures as a way to promote the idea. As Erdmann-Goldoni states, murals and public art "often serve as prominent features, establishing a City's distinctiveness and cultural legacy" (Erdmann-Goldoni, 2024). Durham, with all of its creativity and vibrancy could be a community ready to move strongly in this direction in its redevelopment efforts.

Buy Local Principles

Much of the research around economic development and revitalization centers around concepts that include what is referred to as the "multiplier effect". Simply put, this is the idea that the dollars spent in a local economy with locally owned businesses stay within that community and are recirculated such that the spending from a given dollar actually results in far greater spending within that community (The Benefits of Buying Local, 2009). Durham, of course, with its largely locally owned businesses in the downtown core is prime for this.

One strategy that Durham may benefit from is what is referred to in the literature as developing a "community currency". Community currency serves a way in which residents or students can "trade" their US dollars for a "currency" that is only accepted locally. In turn, this "currency" can then be exchanged by the store owner back into US dollars through the issuing organization or further spent at another Durham establishment that also accepts the currency. In time, this can help perpetuate and protect local spending while "effectively fostering economic, social and environmental sustainability" (Michel and Hudson, 2015).

To further leverage this though, Durham may also be interested in ways in which the town can use land use regulations to prevent franchised or corporate chain stores from setting up shop in the town. This can be through employing what are referred to as "Formula Business Restrictions" or FBRs. Formula Business Restrictions can take a number of forms designed to "protect unique community character and protect independent mom-and-pop businesses". As Kim and Zhou point out, "small American towns often strive to protect and promote a unique "sense of place" to attract residents, visitors and businesses" (Kim and Zhou, 2021).

Interestingly, there are a number of associated positive results that have been found in communities that have established Formula Business Restrictions. For example, communities that have established FBRs are found to have a higher number of employees working in mom-and-pop businesses, a higher mom-and-pop business employment share as a percentage of total employment and that these effects continue to grow over time (Kim and Zhou, 2021). Durham presently only has a handful of what would be referred to as formula-based businesses and this strategy could be used to protect that unique characteristic of the downtown.

Another strategy that Durham may seek to employ is the idea of turning inward in a way to celebrate itself. Many communities have local festivals or so called “market days” which allow for businesses to showcase themselves with additional tent set-ups located outside on sidewalks during a day or weekend where traffic is curtailed and the roadway turned more pedestrian friendly (University of Minnesota Extension, 2024). One way Durham may help make this happen is by working with the Durham Business Association much as other communities work with the local Chambers of Commerce with theirs.

For context, New Hampshire as a whole is said to have particularly strong support for local business even beyond Durham. Data from iBusiness Funding suggests that that New Hampshire is the second strongest state when it comes to local spending. In New Hampshire, residents made 2.9 average visits to small businesses over shopping online at Amazon.com (Smith, 2022).

Social and Environment Emphases

Many college towns have strong social and environmental ethos and Durham is no different. In the 2015 Master Plan, a number of traditional and innovative recommendations initiatives have been endorsed. This includes sections that speak to preservation of the natural environment in a part of the commercial core is referred to as Coe’s Corner as well as notes on energy efficiency throughout. While altruistic endeavors are more difficult to measure than traditional metrics used in economic development, Gann suggests economic developers in college towns focus on these attributes as means by which to attract visitors and new residents in all phases of life (Gann, 2010)

In terms of this, Gann suggests that college towns playing hosts to universities with their often green and leafy campuses, can and should, seek to use this to their advantage (Gann, 2010). One way in which this could be done is through the development of Town parks adjacent to the downtown. Perhaps Durham could create more attractive, pedestrian walkways to the nearby Old Landing Park or they could seek to augment downtown plantings with trees that would serve as a de facto continuation of UNH’s arboretum which exists on its campus. Researcher Eckhard Auch notes that a well-considered and executed street tree environment has an impact on our quality of life and well-being in “these times of progressing urbanization” which may serve Durham well (Auch, 2016).

Interruption

Any discussion of economic revitalization efforts, particularly in a downtown setting such as Durham would be incomplete without a recognition of the difficulties and changes that have come in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. In March 2020, when the United States businesses everywhere were impacted by voluntary and involuntary shut downs, college towns like Durham which are reliant on the student populations, were especially hard hit as schools were closed and students were sent home. Fortunately,

things have begun to turn around for college towns with the resumption of “business as usual”. It should be noted though, that this is not happening quite fast enough for some (Carrasco, M. 2022).

As noted throughout, all of the above strategies and ideas are rife with the interplay between the Town of Durham proper and that of the university and its students. We will see this even clearer now, as we pivot to our work on structured interviews with businesses and organizations that call Durham home. From there, we will begin to develop a strategy that Durham can employ to tie all of this together and undertake an approach to embark upon.

Structured Interviews

Pivoting to my efforts to approach the businesses to which I has been assigned to conduct my research with, I began by submitting questions to Durham NH’s Planning Director Michael Behrendt for ultimate inclusion in a standardized list of questions that UNH Public Administration students would ask subjects in an interview phase. In putting these together, an emphasis was placed on drawing out participant thoughts and opinions on what economic redevelopment opportunities may exist in Durham. As Galleta states, structured interview questions should provide a foundation for data gathering that while “allowing room for the researcher to pursue questions that critically engage the researcher and participant in exploring the participant’s experience through another angle of vision, informed by theory and perhaps other data emerging out of the research” (Galleta, 2012). If done correctly, this will lead to more organic conversations and greater insight in qualitative data for the Durham Planning Department to use.

The businesses and organizations to which I was assigned included the following;

Clark's American Bistro
48 Main Street
Durham, NH 03824

Franz's Food
46 Main Street
Durham, NH 03824

Durham Business Association
8 Newmarket Road
Durham, NH 03824

Durham House of Pizza
40 Main St.
Durham, NH 03824

Durham Community Church
17 Main St.
Durham, NH 03824

First Seacoast Bank
7 Mill Road
Durham, NH 03824

Durham Great Bay Rotary
1 Morgan Way
Durham, NH 03824

I began reaching out to these businesses the week of November 25th 2024 to begin scheduling interviews, continuing to reach out periodically through the following weeks if I did not hear back. Interviews were then scheduled and conducted the weeks of December 2nd and December 9th, 2024.

Structured Interviews – Discussion

In all, I was able to conduct interviews with four different businesses and organizations in Durham. I held phone interviews with Doug Clark of Clark's Restaurant and an anonymous employee of a financial institution (not speaking on behalf of the institution), and conducted in-person interviews with Diane Thompson of the Durham Community Church and Nick Simone of Hop and Grind. In addition, I received a filled-out questionnaire from Will Lenharth of the Rotary Club of Durham/Great Bay. Of the 7 businesses and organizations I was originally assigned to communicate with, none were non-responsive, however, despite repeated efforts to arrange for interviews, three were not available to participate.

Of note, when I contacted the Durham Business Association to schedule an interview, I was told that the association at this point "is not doing much lately except for (me) posting our members promos on our Facebook page". Another contact, Franz Guest from Franz's Food, was found to be on vacation until the new year making his participation impossible. To make up for this, I reached out to the Manager, Nick Simone, of a local Durham restaurant called Hop and Grind to bolster the information that I was able to collect from the subjects by adding another restaurant in its place. The restaurant's information is;

Hop and Grind
17 Madbury Rd.
Durham NH 03824

Findings

Broadly, the tone of the structured interviews I was able to conduct was positive. I was largely greeted with interest from all parties that I spoke with and the respondents genuinely appeared to take an interest in talking and acknowledged their critical role in helping the town and not just having the town help them. The conversations were rife with community mindedness from various angles.

Below, I provide highlight responses to each of the nine areas of interest that MPA students were asked by the Planning Department to conduct research on with survey participants.

- *Overall Condition of the Downtown and General Questions*
 - *Durham Community Church: Dianne Thompson: Ms. Thompson was quite reflective about the present state of downtown Durham in our interview with her being a 50-year plus resident of the town. She believes more could be done in terms of marketing Durham to include things that make it unique, which it is being the only college town in the area. She finds the buildings to be somewhat bland and does not feel it is a particularly inviting area.*
 - *Financial Institution: Anonymous: Durham lacks an identity beyond the university in some ways, while it is a wonderful community, the university is what people think of and not the town being distinct from it.*
 - *Rotary Club of Durham/Great Bay: Will Lenharth: Mr. Lenharth expressed that Durham used to have a reputation of a quiet college town, however, these days he is not sure the town has an identity.*
 - *Clark's American Bistro: Doug Clark: It is my impression that Mr. Clark has a long history with the town having grown up there and this informs his strongly held opinions on the current status of downtown. Mr. Clark is dissatisfied with the general condition of the downtown in many regards. He also feels as though there is a lack of initiative or*

direction in place, while also articulating some displeasure that some voices hold larger sway than others.

- *Hop and Grind: Nick Simone: Mr. Simone finds that downtown Durham is in a good place. He points to the role that students play in supporting businesses while recognizing there should be a greater variety of stores to cater to local residents. In his business, he seeks to adapt appropriately to the seasonality of the customer base.*
- **Economics**
 - *Durham Community Church: Ms. Thompson notes that the business mix is nearly all geared to students at this point. She drew attention to the lack of “non-student”/adult restaurants, pointing out that her friend groups rarely dine out in Durham instead opting to travel to Portsmouth despite living within walking distance to downtown. She also notes the town suffered a huge loss when the hardware store downtown closed.*
 - *Rotary Club of Durham/Great Bay: Mr. Lenharth agrees with other subjects that the mix of stores downtown is not ideal. He notes that the town would benefit from a hardware or home décor store to serve those living in apartments downtown. He also notes that he recognizes finding employees is difficult for business owners.*
 - *Financial Institution: The business mix is lacking. There is a distinct lack of restaurants in the downtown that are of interest to non-students. Gatherings often are held in nearby communities because there is not a good place to host events in town.*
 - *Clark’s American Bistro: Mr. Clark believes that Durham has the potential to be a real destination college town, on the level of other Town-Gown examples such as College Park, MD. He strongly feels, however, that the business mix is far too heavily oriented to the student population and not strongly enough to local residents. He believes the town must address the sheer number of convenience and “vape” stores that exist in town and promote efforts to establish a better mix of businesses.*
 - *Hop and Grind: Mr. Simone again states that the business mix is lacking. He would like to see a potential sporting good store and questions the number of convenience stores which all seem to sell similar products which is unlikely to be sustainable.*
- **Traffic**
 - *Durham Community Church: There have been some efforts to adjust from the present one-way traffic flow of downtown at various times in the past with mixed results, notes Ms. Thompson. Despite this, she doesn’t have strong feelings about the flow aside from concerns of speeding and people being on their phones. Perhaps flashing crosswalk signs to draw driver’s attention to them would be in order.*
 - *Rotary Club of Durham/Great Bay: While unsure if a two-way traffic pattern would be better, Mr. Lenharth, noted that the town’s small parking spots, increase traffic by creating more cars in the way as they are trying to park.*
 - *Financial Institution: The one-way traffic pattern is somewhat confounding though it is difficult to imagine it different as that is what we have come to know. Traffic does get backed up at times.*
 - *Clark’s American Bistro: Mr. Clark strongly believes that the one-way traffic pattern is a detriment to development in Durham. He believes that the town should explore roundabouts and perhaps a traffic light.*
 - *Hop and Grind: Mr. Simone thinks that the one-way traffic pattern is ok but believes there to be improvements needed at crosswalks. This may take the form of signaled crosswalks.*

- *Parking*
 - *Durham Community Church: Parking has been inadequately addressed in student housing developments in the past where parking spots were not required to the level of other developments based on the thinking that students would not bring vehicles to school with them. She finds this to have been incorrect and believes they should be required at the same levels.*
 - *Rotary Club of Durham/Great Bay: While noting there is ample parking, Mr. Lenharth again noted small parking spots being an issue.*
 - *Financial Institution: Parking can be an issue on Main St. but there are ample spots adjacent. The 2-hour parking zone limits inhibit spending time at restaurants and bars for out of downtown guests.*
 - *Clark's American Bistro: Parking, in Mr. Clark's opinion, is a challenge. On one hand, the installation of the present kiosk machines to charge for parking have had the effect of leaving up to 50% of spaces empty but he also recognizes that the town must provide parking to coincide with development in what he refers to as a "chicken and the egg" problem. He believes a parking garage is inevitable in will fit in with his later comments focusing on taller development in the downtown, as well as a focus on less surface parking lots.*
 - *Hop and Grind: A strong theme of Mr. Simone's comments were around a lack of free parking available to customers or employees. He states that it deters customers from ordering from his business when they have to pay to park, just to pick up a to-go order on the way home.*
- *Pedestrians, Bicycles and Transit*
 - *Durham Community Church: Downtown is adequately accessible by all modes of transportation however bicycle traffic lanes are poorly designed and unsafe.*
 - *Rotary Club of Durham/Great Bay: Mr. Lenharth believes that the town is accessible by foot and bicycle but is not aware of the bus system.*
 - *Financial Institution: Durham is largely accessible by all forms of transportation.*
 - *Clark's American Bistro: Mr. Clark believes that residential development focused on non-student housing, including the addition of "workforce housing" is the means by which to promote a "walkable community" most effectively. Of note, he believes scooter parking areas should be established.*
 - *Hop and Grind: Hop and Grind is able to attract customers using all forms of transportation and believes this is the case throughout the downtown.*
- *Infrastructure*
 - *Durham Community Church: City services seem to be adequate.*
 - *Rotary Club of Durham/Great Bay: These services appear sufficient.*
 - *Financial Institution: Not much was known about these services aside from being aware of the large stormwater projects that have been somewhat disruptive to traffic and hopefully end soon.*
 - *Clark's American Bistro: Mr. Clark finds that water service is adequate albeit expensive but sewer service is not available throughout the downtown which it should be.*
 - *Hop and Grind: Mr. Simone offered no input on the infrastructure questions, not knowing the specifics.*

- *Police, Fire and Town Services*
 - *Durham Community Church: Ms. Thompson spoke VERY highly of the strength of Durham's municipal employees, the police in particular. She notes that their professionalism and knowledge are a real asset to the community.*
 - *Rotary Club of Durham/Great Bay: These services appear satisfactory.*
 - *Financial Institution: The police services are highly responsive and professional in the town.*
 - *Clark's American Bistro: It is Mr. Clark's opinion that there is an over emphasis on underage drinking in the town, resulting in an inaccurate description of UNH's drinking problem being worse than other college towns.*
 - *Hop and Grind: Mr. Simone would like to see greater enforcement of j-walking occurring when students are intoxicated and walking around downtown. It creates a chaotic environment for customers and adds to a feeling of unrest or unease around the town when it occurs, deterring visitors to the downtown who are not participating. He believes the presence of an officer or cross guard would help alleviate this.*
- *Design, Aesthetics and Landscaping*
 - *Durham Community Church: Ms. Thompson notes that there are some parts of downtown that are not particularly attractive though some buildings are. She would like to see property owners improve on this.*
 - *Rotary Club of Durham/Great Bay: Mr. Lenharth refrained from offering any specific recommendations on this matter aside from noting that taller buildings should only be allowed if there was a compelling reason such as enabling them to create more parking. He also notes more trash cans may be appropriate downtown as well.*
 - *Financial Institution: Durham definitely needs aesthetic improvements. While "cute" it is not a particularly attractive place and certainly isn't a destination.*
 - *Clark's American Bistro: According to Mr. Clark, there are both positives and negatives to the concept of design standards in the downtown. He believes that the town should seek to incorporate traditional New England design into building projects that are beyond perhaps what would be referred to as the "scale" of the same town but there is a danger of "overenforcement" that drifts into the realm of ridiculous.*
 - *Hop and Grind: Mr. Simone supports the development of the town encouraging taller development in the downtown, particularly with regard to housing where he feels a need exists.*
- *Promotion and Events*
 - *Durham Community Church: Ms. Thompson both personally and as the church found the events Durham puts on to be good for the community however, she notes that they seem to get smaller and smaller each year. In particular, she notes the Memorial Day event lacks a proper parade and she misses a carnival coming to town.*
 - *Rotary Club of Durham/Great Bay: The events downtown are great and the current number of events is sufficient.*
 - *Financial Institution: The community events that occur are good for the community and drive residents to the downtown.*
 - *Clark's American Bistro: Mr. Clark would like to see Durham re-hire an Economic Development Coordinator position to re-establish the Durham Business Association and lead efforts to coordinate with the university on development matters.*

- *Hop and Grind: Hop and Grind does see increased business with the events that are presently put on by the town. They also see UNH events such as hockey and football games as equally important to the downtown.*
- **Organization**
 - *Durham Community Church: The main takeaway that Ms. Thompson would like to impress is that there is a tension that exists with the town and the students. She finds general decorum to be diminishing and would like to see the university play a bigger role with the town, as opposed to vice versa. She recalls a time when both organizations more proactively sought to better communicate with each other, including residents and students, to remind them that “we’re all in this together” and foster better cooperation.*
 - *Rotary Club of Durham/Great Bay: Mr. Lenharth thinks that wrapping downtown into UDay would be good for the community. He does imagine that someday a parking structure might be appropriate.*
 - *Financial Institution: There is a perception that Durham’s taxes are “sky high” which may represent a barrier to development efforts.*
 - *Clark’s American Bistro: Mr. Clark considers current development efforts inadequate. He identifies the redevelopment of the Town of Durham owned lot on Main Street to be the highest priority for the town. He would like to see a potential hotel/condo/conference center at the lot built in conjunction with a parking garage. He sees this being part of new, denser development in the core, that will help the downtown repopulate itself with adults, something that has lacked in recent decades.*
 - *Hop and Grind: Hop and Grind would like to see the Planning Department on the streets speaking with residents and business owners more, just as being accomplished with this project. There is an understanding that development is a long game and one that works in fits and starts. What the community wants today may be different tomorrow so keeping a flexible strategy is important.*

Something to Consider

Given everything that we have learned to this point in this investigation, from the review of the 2015 Master Plan and related planning documents, to the research on economic revitalization in a college town, to the qualitative research conducted with local businesses and organizations, one thing is clear; people care. People care what their community is and what is in store for it’s future.

Given this, one thing that Durham clearly must come to terms with in the future is the potential danger that shrinking enrollments at four-year colleges and universities represent to the vibrancy and resiliency of the community. According to the New York Times, college and university enrollment is declining with little indication that trend is going to reverse itself. Researcher Nathan Grawe from Carleton College notes, “it looks like the future is declining numbers of young people likely to attend college” (DePillis, 2023). As this continues to happen nationwide, and assuming Durham and the University of New Hampshire are not immune to it, the town clearly must find ways in which to adequately diversify the businesses in the downtown to attract more non-student residents and out-of-towners as the ability to rely on students to ensure a vibrant downtown may wain.

To do so, and to directly address the stated deficiencies of the lack of gathering spaces, food and beverage establishments that cater to more than just students and opportunities to promote Durham as a destination, I would recommend that Durham undertake steps to attract a micro-brewery to its downtown business roster. I say this as there are many positives, including economic development

implications, that come with locally owned and operated micro-breweries, and, in many ways, this industry potentially locating in the downtown ticks many of the boxes that Durham has already identified that it would like to see.

Micro-breweries, or craft breweries, are “small beer manufacturers that are not owned and/or controlled by a large beer manufacturer” (Hancock, et al., 2018). They can take different forms from small brewpubs to larger establishments with distribution across multiple states. In 2022, the total number of breweries operating in the United States grew to 9,709 from 9,384 in 2021 (The Brewers Association, 2023).

Research on the economic and social impact of breweries suggests that there are a number of positive impacts on a community related to breweries that Durham could capitalize on. These include;

- Breweries contribute to a town’s “vibrancy” by providing space for social connection
- Breweries attract more than just young people. The atmosphere also attracts families looking for social experiences
- Breweries are often opened by local people in their own hometowns
- Breweries can contribute to local agricultural networks and markets by using local ingredients
- Many breweries offer food which helps attract more visitors and results in longer stays in the community
- Local folks and out of town visitors patronize breweries. It is found that local people may be a typical customer during the week with out-of-towners being more regularly seen on weekends
- Breweries being rooted in local communities provides an opportunity for “giving back” and community fundraising opportunities

Clearly these are all positive attributes that Durham would like to see in businesses that locate in the downtown. According to researchers, “craft breweries have been cited as a tool in revitalizing local economies” (Hancock, C., et al., 2018) I note as well, that the benefits of breweries fall squarely in line with ideas expressed in the 2015 Master Plan and many of my interviews.

One unique advantage that Durham may have in an attempt to help locate a brewery in the downtown may actually come through an opportunity to partner with UNH. In 2016, UNH established what it calls the UNH Brewing Science Laboratory and established Brewing as an available minor for undergraduate students. In many ways, this underscores the importance of brewing as a viable career field into the future and this may provide a source of employees for such an endeavor.

But thinking this through, what this means is that within the UNH footprint, the equipment including settling and fermentation tanks, all very expensive elements, is already located in Durham. What may be possible is a potential partnership with a for-profit entity that could co-locate with the UNH brewing operation in a vacant downtown storefront. By doing this, the town could realize locating a public and provide partnership with characteristics that fit squarely into articulated desires for the town. The Planning Department could play a role in this by seeking to facilitate and bring the parties together in workshop sessions.

This partnership could take the form of the university perhaps hosting classes in the day and the operator managing weekend and nighttime operations. In looking at this, the idea is not all that far-fetched. For example, many culinary schools have has partnered with restaurateurs to establish restaurants which provide an opportunity for students to gain practical, real world experience.

Regardless of the structure of such an arrangement, one potential resource that could help in getting the word out about the brewery and attract out of town interest in Durham is the New Hampshire Brewers Association (NHBA). This is because the NHBA compiles an annual list of all of the New Hampshire based breweries and produces what they call the New Hampshire Beer Trail Passport Program. This program, where consumers are encouraged to visit local breweries around the state is designed to both promote the industry and reward consumers (who may be eligible to redeem “stamps” received from visiting a higher number of breweries on the list), but it also enriches the local community by driving traffic there.

Taking this one step further, Durham can look at other local and adjacent communities to see that there is indeed a market for breweries in the area which is information it can use to promote itself. In just the surrounding towns of Dover, Newmarket, Northwood, and there are at least 10 breweries. In some ways, Durham is a gap or even an anomaly in that it doesn't yet have one.

To start the ball rolling on this, the Planning Department could begin by gathering information on the local brewing industry by performing site visits and holding stakeholder meetings. The Department could gauge interest at the university level for its appetite for such a partnership or simply get facetime with local brewers to make sure that Durham is on their mind. Perhaps the town could even look into hosting its own brew fest which brings many brewers together in a festival like environment which would raise awareness of the town to the industry.

To further build upon the importance of the relationship between a town that has successfully attracted breweries to its business portfolio and the breweries themselves, I reached out to nearby communities to get their stories. Chris Parker is the Deputy City Manager in nearby Dover, NH. Dover, which calls itself home to three breweries in it's downtown, has found the industry to be vital in maintaining and enriching its downtown experience. Mr. Parker states, “The introduction of breweries into our downtown redevelopment efforts has been a game changer. While breweries require some additional planning assistance when getting started, there are not huge differences to the siting regulations when compared to traditional restaurants. What is unique though, is what they offer when opened. The customer base they attract is largely distinct from a traditional restaurant base, meaning that they are bringing additional traffic, and dollars, into our downtown. They tend to be far more event driven when compared to traditional restaurants so whether it is cornhole tournaments or special beer releases, there is always an event on the calendar that is driving traffic.” (Parker. C. personal communication, December 12, 2024).

In the City of Concord, NH's case, the situation has not been much different. Matt Walsh is the City's Deputy City Manager of Community Development. When I reached out to Mr. Walsh, he was reflective about the roles that breweries have played in the City's downtown redevelopment efforts. He states, “Breweries have become means by which towns and cities can drive local economic development efforts. We have one brewery in our downtown which was sited after our Main Street redevelopment efforts in 2015-17. There is no question they are an activity generator, adding to the character and attractiveness of our downtown, and helping to establish the City of Concord as a place for residents and a destination for out of town visitors” (Walsh. M. personal communication, December 13, 2024).

What is particularly interesting about leveraging breweries to spur economic redevelopment is that there is more and more emerging national research to look at for guidance. According to Wartell and Vasquez, who wrote a book on the interplay between breweries and cities, there are breweries that have popped up all along the urban-rural continuum that are all viable operations (Wartell and Vasquez,

2023). As such, Planning officials would be well served to investigate various incentives, including tax abatements, that may be available in Durham.

With that, this concludes my work addressing revitalization in downtown Durham, NH. It has been a privilege learning about the current trends in economic development as they relate to college towns as well as speaking with the business community in Durham. The town and UNH have a great past and bright future that I cannot wait to see. I will end with this wonderful quote I found in my research from the late New York State Senator, Daniel Patrick Moynihan. In response to the question of how one creates a great city, he states, "Create a great university, and wait 200 years".

Cheers!

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