



PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Joe Persechino, Tighe & Bond

COPY: Durham Planning Board
Richard Reine, Public Works Director
Audrey Cline, Building Inspector

FROM: Rick Taintor, Consulting Planner

DATE: November 10, 2021

SUBJECT: Notes on Mill Plaza Redevelopment plan set dated 10/8/21

As I stated at the October 27 Planning Board meeting, I have been reviewing the latest plan set and have a number of comments, questions and suggestions. These are presented below by plan sheet, including cross-references where appropriate.

C-102 Site Plan

- Crosswalks:
 - The detail on C-503 shows a typical crosswalk width of 8 feet but the site plan shows crosswalks that appear to be 12 feet wide as well as 8 feet. Clarify on site plan and/or adjust notation on detail.
 - The 12' crosswalk in front of Rite-Aid terminates at a landscaped island.
- Stairs to Main Street: Provide details showing design of railings and/or fences.
- Raised traffic table between Building A and Building B:
 - Provide a detail showing the elevation of the traffic table in relation to the vehicular access ways and sidewalks, transitions, and materials.
 - Does the table rise to level with sidewalks on both sides (i.e., at Building A and Building B)?
 - If the table rises to curb/sidewalk level, how will vehicles turning right from in front of Building A be prevented from driving on the landscaped island?
 - How is pedestrian movement being guided? There appears to be a crosswalk defined on the north side of the table, but the desire line will be between the corner at Building A and the entrance of Building B. It does not seem to make sense to design a separate crosswalk that does not follow this strong desire line.

- Are accessible spaces required (a) in the covered parking area and (b) for the curbside parking at Building C retail/bank entrances?
- The parking requirement for the restaurant in Building B should be 46 (as stated in the “Non-Residential Parking Requirements” table) rather than 20 as shown on the plan.
- “See Signage Plan” note – when is that plan proposed to be submitted?
- Transition from driveway to Chesley Drive walkway:
 - The plan indicates that the walkway ends with vertical granite curb (VGC). Instead, there should be flush granite curb (FGC) at the end of the walkway with a transition from VGC to FGC on the left and from FGC to SGC on the right.
 - Consider signage and/or pavement markings for cyclist safety.
- The height of chain link fence on top of the retaining wall at the east side of the site should be specified.

C-103 Grading, Drainage, and Erosion Control Plan

- The retaining wall appears to be 8'± high at the proposed 54' contour and 6'± high at the proposed 56' contour. Combined with the narrowness of the planting areas at the top and foot of the wall, I have concerns about the effectiveness of the screening plantings in landscape plan. (Also see comments below regarding the planting plans.)

C-104 Utilities Plan

- Proposed electric (PE) does not match Electrical Site Plan (ES20.1) – see notes for ES20.1.
- Does the generator in the southeast corner of Building C serve Building B?

C-105 Conceptual Utility Easement Plan

- Show an easement to the Town for the existing municipal sewer line.

C-507 Details Sheet

- Retaining wall detail: Compacted subgrade and crushed stone leveling pad in front of wall base are in the 10'± planting strip for screening trees – how might this impact the viability of the trees planted in this strip?

C-702 Buffer Restoration Plan

- On the plan view, “Typical slope profile B” does not point to a profile line. Should it point to the vertical line further to the right?
- “Typical Slope Profile – B” shows fill in the 25' shoreland buffer, i.e., increase in grade as well as restoration plantings.

L2.0, L2.2 Planting Plans

I have concerns as to whether the proposed plantings along the property line with the Church Hill (Toomerfs) property are viable in terms of initial planting, maintenance and replacement, and effective screening:

- L2.0 refers to trees planted in a “20’ wide buffer area”. However, the actual buffer area is only 15’ wide (20’ from the property line would extend to the far side of the concrete walkway).
- Half of the trees in the “20-foot buffer area” are planted in a 5’± strip between a proposed retaining wall (with a chain-link fence on top) and the existing stone wall along the property line. The other half are planted in a strip that appears to be less than 10 feet between the foot of the wall and a concrete sidewalk. (Refer to C-103 for the retaining wall height, C-507 for the retaining wall detail, and L3.0 for planting details.)
- L2.2 appears to show an 8’ planting strip at the foot of the wall, a 2’ wide wall, and a 5’ planting strip at the top of the wall, with no indication of any width of the existing stone wall within this buffer area. It would be helpful to provide a detailed plan view showing the actual typical proposed dimensions to confirm that the planting plan is in fact viable.
- Between the retaining wall and the existing stone wall along the property line:
 - A 10’-12’ columnar fir would have a root ball of about 30” (per American Standard for Nursery Stock). The planting detail (L3.0/2) indicates that the planting pit for an evergreen tree will be 2 to 3 times the root ball diameter – thus, 5 to 7.5 feet. There is barely enough space between the proposed retaining wall and the existing stone wall to provide the minimum size planting pit.
 - The planting detail also shows guying for evergreen trees at 120°. With only 5 feet of planting area, this will require access to adjacent property for planting, with guying across the stone wall.
 - Because of the retaining wall and chain link fence, and the narrow strip of trees at the top of the wall, there is no room to walk or get machinery from the Mill Plaza property to maintain trees in this strip or (if necessary) to replace them. Therefore, a landscaping and access easement over the adjacent property will be required.
- Between the foot of retaining wall and the sidewalk:
 - The retaining wall is 6’ to 8’ high along at least 100’ of the wall length. This will limit the screening by trees planted at the base of the wall.
 - “Compacted sub grade” extends outward from the retaining wall (C-507): how will this impact root spread for the trees planted at the base of the wall?

L2.3 Planting Plan (Also see C-701 - Buffer Coverage Plan)

- The proposed landscaped area extends across the existing sanitary sewer (SS) for approximately 140 feet, from SMH 1601 until the sewer intersects with the Chesley Road path. The planting plan shows a variety of shrubs above and close to the sewer line, as well as a columnar Norway Spruce. Should the area over the sewer line, and within some distance on either side, be kept clear of trees and shrubs?

L3.0 Planting Details

- Detail 4 for “Deciduous Tree Planting: Center Parking Island”:
 - Change title to “Deciduous Tree Planting: Parking Islands” (i.e., delete “Center”)
 - Note that engineered soil extends 8 feet beyond the curb but graphically this looks more like 8 inches. Add a clear written note so that there is no ambiguity.
- Detail 6 refers to “LX/LX.X” – add correct reference.

L4.1 Hardscape Plan

- B – “Specialty paving in roadway” – provide detail. (Also see comments about raised traffic table under C-102 above.)

L4.2 Hardscape Plan

- “Specialty paving and bench seating” – clarify where (including bench locations).

A20.1, A20.2 Exterior Elevations

A20.3 Renderings

- List the exterior materials and colors as approved by Planning Board.

A40.1 Rendered Perspective

- See questions above for C-102 re: raised traffic table. In this image the table appears to be flush with curbs at both ends: how will pedestrians be protected from turning vehicles?
- Bollards in front of Building B entrance (see C-102) are not shown.

ES10.1 Electrical Site Lighting Plan

- Are fixtures dark-sky compliant?

ES20.1 Electrical Site Plan

- Inconsistencies with C-104 (Utilities Plan)
 - ES20.1 shows electric service entering the site from two locations: (1) pole NETT/3 on Mill Road and (2) pole NET&T4 / PSNH/7/C at the north side of the site, next to the path to Main Street. The Utilities Plan C-104 shows only the line entering the site from the north side of the site.
 - The electric line route from the Main Street path to the transformers differs from the route shown on C-104.

- Several structures marked “E” with a square box are shown on ES20.1 but are not shown on any of the civil plans. They may be electric manholes but are symbolized differently than the symbols for electric manholes on the Utilities Plan.
 - Along the line from Mill Road, one of these structures appears to be on top of the municipal sewer line (and partially under the sidewalk along the south side of the site), and another appears to be under a tree on one of the landscaped islands.
 - Along the line from the Main Street path, one structure appears to be under a maple tree and the other seems to be either under some bushes or within the ledge cut area.