



TOWN OF DURHAM
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Town Planner's Project Review
Wednesday, December 11, 2024

- XII. **Mill Plaza – Façade Improvements and Site Enhancements.** Site plan application for Phase 1 – façade improvement to rear building and Phase 2 – site enhancement around rear building. Conceptual application for Phase 3 – hardscape enhancements between front building and Mill Road, Phase 4 – façade improvement to front building, and Phase 5 – improvements to parking lot and installation of walking path along College Brook. Pete Doucet c/o Torrington Properties, property owner. Steve Mayer c/o Allen & Major, engineer. Jeff Gannon c/o PCA, Inc., architect. Central Business District. Map 109, Lot 3.
- I recommend that the board accept the application for Phases 1 and 2 as complete (with conditions stated below) and hold the public hearing on January 8, 2025.

Please note the following:

- 1) **Proposed development.** The plan is for extensive façade and site improvements, including building a footpath along College Brook. The applicant said they evaluated adding residential uses but the return on that investment did not make sense. Unlike the earlier Mill Plaza application from years earlier, this project will retain the two existing buildings.
- 2) **Acceptance.** I recommend acceptance of the application as complete (for Phases 1 and 2) with the condition that the applicant submit outstanding items in a timely manner including the survey and existing conditions plan (to be submitted shortly) and the conditional use application (below) and that the Planning Board will use its discretion in reviewing waiver applications. Although some items are needed the application is certainly substantially complete and should be accepted in order to proceed with the public hearing at the next meeting on January 8.
- 3) **Phases.** As noted, there are 5 phases for the application. A formal site plan application is submitted for Phases 1 and 2 and a design review for Phases 3-5. The discussions and public hearing should cover all phases. If the application for Phases 1 and 2 is approved, then the applicant will submit a formal application for Phases 3-5 at their convenience. Note that Phase 4 includes façade improvements to the front building. The applicant expects to do similar façade improvements to those for Phase 1. Phase 3 could potentially be expanded to include a buffer along Mill Road.
- 4) **Drive through.** The applicant will need to submit a conditional use application for the drive through. A drive through is allowed by conditional use only for a financial institution. The applicant expects First Seacoast Bank to move from its present location to this spot.

- 5) Stormwater. The applicant asked for a waiver from the stormwater checklist. Public Works questioned this request and is speaking with the applicant.
- 6) Impervious area. The maximum impervious area allowed in Central Business District is 100% but, of course, the site will have a lower impervious area with landscaping and the buffer from College Brook. The Planning Board and applicant will address the wetland and shoreland buffer from College Brook as part of Phase 5.
- 7) Technical Review Group. See notes from the TRG meeting that was held on December 3.
- 8) Crosswalk at Mill Road. Public Works pointed out that the Town is looking at relocating the existing crosswalk on Mill Road located close to Main Street and possibly adding a crossing signal and asked the applicant to coordinate with any plans for the crosswalk.
- 9) Timing. Proposed timing for construction:
Phases 1 and 2 – Spring 2025
Phase 3 – Fall 2025
Phases 4 and 5 – Spring 2026 (though it could potentially be accelerated depending on various factors)
- 10) Fire Access. The Fire Marshal has asked about potential emergency access from Mill Road near where the existing crosswalk is near Main Street and along Chesley Drive (I expect there would be significant public opposition to the latter).
- 11) Parking lot. The parking lot (or portions of the parking lot) will receive a sealcoat and restriping. The parking lot will not be rehabilitated. There will be a slight increase in parking for Phases 1 and 2 and an overall decrease of about 40 parking spaces overall. The board will need to clarify whether any spaces are or will be/should be rented to parties not connected with the plaza.
- 12) Landscaping. We will want to explore significant enhancements to landscaping throughout the parking lot in later phases. An effort should be made to install ornamental (if not shade) trees in most/every island, including several islands in Phase 1 and 2. I suggest considering a different species than serviceberry for the islands (a species more treelike as serviceberry tends to branch out into multiple small trunks).
- 13) Tenants. A plan will be needed for any tenants that are relocated from one site at the development to another, including addressing water and sewer connections and any fees.
- 14) Architecture. The site is subject to the Town's Architecture Regulations. A full set of drawings has been submitted.
- 15) Signage. We recommend that the applicant submit a sign master plan at the appropriate time.
- 16) Details. More details will be needed for Phases 1 and 2 for construction management, landscaping, pavers, lighting, some operations issues (snow storage, recycling), and other elements.