

Friday, July 27, 2007

Parade Mall replacement plan OK'd

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PORTSMOUTH — Goodbye Parade Mall. Hello 128-room hotel, restaurants, retail and office space.

The Planning Board on Thursday approved a \$100 million project to raze the existing office building off Maplewood Avenue and construct a hotel, 28 residential condominiums, 158,500 square feet of office space, 57,000-square-feet of retail space, and a 345-space underground parking garage.

Four separate buildings would be created — a 52,138 square-foot, five-story building with retail and 28 residential units; a 98,303-square-foot, five-story building consisting of retail, restaurant and hotel; and two, four-story buildings totaling 128,267 and 95,490 square feet containing retail, restaurant and office space.

"It's a great city and everybody worked hard to get to this point," said Jeff Johnston, a principal at Cathartes Private Investments, following the board's unanimous vote.

Johnston said the developer hopes to begin construction in late spring or early summer of 2008. Construction should take 18 to 22 months and be completed by fall 2009.

The developer also announced that the hotel would be an Element franchise, which is a branch of the Starwood Hotels & Resorts that targets extended-stay business travelers.

"There is no extended-stay (hotel) downtown," Johnston said.

He added that the office space will be in two 25,000-square-foot sections. The developer is targeting Fortune 500 companies.

"We can handle a large tenant, which we hope to secure, or we can subdivide it up to several units of 5,000 square feet," he said.

Architect Lisa DeStefano, who worked on the project along with Elkus Manfredi Architects, said she "couldn't be happier" and thanked city officials for working with them to improve the



Image courtesy of Elkus Manfredi Architects A rendering of the proposed Parade Mall redevelopment project looking up Hanover Street. The project would raze the existing building and replace it with a 147-room hotel, 28 residential condominiums, 150,000 square feet of office space and 70,000 square feet of retail space at the site bordered by Hanover, Maplewood and Deer streets. Image courtesy of Elkus Manfredi Architects Pictured is a view of the proposed Parade Mall redevelopment project looking up Hanover Street. The project would raze the existing building and place a hotel, condos, office and retail space at the site.

project.

"The community has been excited from day one," she said, adding that as a resident of Portsmouth who grew up in that section of the city, she is excited about transforming the old urban renewal area.

The development would create a new private roadway that would go down the middle of the property in the approximate location of the Vaughan Mall on Hanover Street. The new street, which currently has no name, would have sidewalks of 22 feet in width on one side and 12-15 feet on the other side with parallel parking on both

"What we're really trying to do is re-create streets and make connections to the rest of the city," said architect David Manfredi. "It does restore the original street grid of the city. It makes this block down to more manageable pieces and a pedestrian scale."

Manfredi said this is truly a mixed-use concept. "It is a block which we have retail, retail and restaurant on the ground floor, office and residential above and parking below grade," he said.

He said there would be at least three outdoor seating areas for restaurants at the corner of Hanover Street and on both sides of the private way at the Deer Street end.

Gregg Mikolaities of Appledore Engineering went through 50 stipulations from the Technical Advisory Committee during the two-hour review.

DeStefano read into the record the names of 12 business officials and residents who endorsed the plans.

Corey Colwell, of 403 The Hill, an abutter, also endorsed the plan.

"We believe this project has developed into a whole new community for this area. What's there is OK if you like that late '60s early '70s look. In a few years with this board's approval, we're going to have a fantastic project," he said.

Ryan Baker, of 445 Ocean Road, said the project would tie everything together between the older section of town in Market Square and the new. "Hopefully, we'll enjoy the downtown area and have some more places to eat," he said.

Bill Eley of 188 Dennett St. expressed concern about the water and sewer infrastructure.

The applicant will help pay for a change to the traffic signal at the intersection of Russell and Market streets from a flashing red-and-yellow light to a full signal. It will also help share the cost of hiring an independent consultant to review the timing of the traffic signals on Maplewood Avenue.

Board member Donald Coker expressed concern about parking.

"We're going to wake up one day and there's going to be no parking," Coker said.

However, it was pointed out that the office use would be busier during the day, and the retail and restaurant use would be busier at night. The project meets all parking requirements.

Planning Board Chairman John Ricci praised the project. "This is probably the most thorough application I've seen. I commend you all," he said.

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