

## Pepperell Mill Site Information Interviews

Jay Donovan, Assistant Director, NMCOG  
 Joe Sergi, Chair, Mill Site Study Committee and Pepperell Selectman  
 Robert Hanson, Pepperell Town Administrator  
 Bonnie Biocchi, Regional Dir., Massachusetts Office of Business Development  
 Davis Hobbs, G.M. and V.P., Swift River Hydro  
 Roger Goscombe, Owner/Broker, Century 21 Nashoba  
 Michael Coffey, Chair, Pepperell Board of Assessors  
 Max Craig (at site tour), previously Power Plant Manager at mill site  
 Laurie Masiello, President, Masy Systems  
 Frank Hartnett, Jr., ERA Morrison  
 Fran Strimenos, Owner, Skydive Pepperell  
 Mark Matthews, President, Astron  
 Richard Green, CEO, 1A Auto  
 Andre Porter, Exec. Dir., MA Office of Small Business & Entrepreneurship  
 Mike Mitchell, VP, Planning & Development, MassDevelopment  
 Nicholas Cate, Chair, Pepperell Planning Board  
 Russ Smith, Exec. Dir., Lowell, MA Small Business Assistance Center  
 Diane Cronin, Owner, Covered Bridge Country Store  
 Theresa Park, Economic Development Director, Lowell, MA  
 Roger Bintliff, Developer, Edgecomb Development  
 Tom Niemann, Developer, Niemann Capital, LLC  
 Katie Hearn, Developer, Struever Bros. Eccles & Rouse  
 Rick Quesada, Developer, Fore River Co.

Information interviews were conducted with the individuals above, identifying the following key Opportunities and Concerns/Constraints/Issues for the Mill Site (in the opinion of the interviewees):

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Concerns/Constraints/Issues</b>
Tie the site to Railroad Square, river activities and the residential area around the mill	Limited market for retail and related businesses
Integrate open space and access to the river with the rest of the plan	Possible environmental issues, particularly in courtyard area near old machine shop; some asbestos within buildings; environmental concerns could impose limitations on development for uses involving children
Manageable number of residential units—less than 100-150	Town should identify what it wants on the site to the property owner so that he will know the desirable range of opportunities that are possible for development

Site could be designated Economic Opportunity Area (EOA)	Concern on density of development not leading to congestion; although traffic issues can likely be solved
Site could have Tax Increment Financing (TIF) designation	Concern about wrong kind of development occurring--and leading to a future scenario with empty storefronts
Mill site provides opportunity to draw people to downtown	Municipality would not have the funding to acquire the site nor should it become a developer of the site
Well-balanced mixed use development with light commercial uses, a park, some residential build-out, a possible destination restaurant (requiring a liquor license) and retail uses that are appropriate and that address the leakage to Nashua	River, dam and current appearance of the power plant is a limitation on the site
Low traffic volume uses are best; no high truck traffic bringing in raw materials or bringing out finished goods; no large manufacturers	Access issues—site is end-wise to the main street; entrance on Main St. is difficult for access as is the Main St./Mill St. intersection due to traffic flow
Office park environment would be good with R&D, non-retail uses; medical offices probably not likely	Public park is a nice idea but a very costly one for the result that would be achieved
River is an asset (but also a potential impediment)	Pepperell is eight miles and three towns away from a major roadway
Due to Pepperell's being a transportation backwater, drawing people to the site would require unique, niche uses at the site	Demographics don't work for getting a major restaurant or a major retailer like a Lowe's or Home Depot
Mill site is a significant, if not critical location within the town; and will become more and more important in how Pepperell continues to grow	Rehab of existing mill buildings, if even possible, could be very costly due to state of disrepair
Town should be proactive on site development versus reactive by putting in safeguards related to the parcel	Swift River Hydro has rights through mill site to access river to maintain their operations
Small manufacturing / industrial operations are a possible use	A lot of thinking underway on possible future residential projects—just in the talking stage now; and while current demand is not high, the economy will come back
Smart growth approach would have residential on site to accommodate and support businesses that are started there	Residential direction is refocusing on smaller sized homes
Possibility of historic buildings tax credit and State economic incentive programs can be explored	Potential declining school enrollment for next 10 years

Swift River Hydro plans to upgrade the cosmetic appearance of their power station to make it more pleasing	Visibility from Main St. is an impediment to retail; previously interested developer had acquired corner parcel at Mill St./Main St. to potentially use to improve visibility and/or access
Pepperell is geographically well positioned within an hour from Boston, Worcester, Southern Maine, Southern Vermont and New Hampshire	\$2 million asking price for property ( and may be increasing)
Multi-family rental might make sense for meeting potential residential demand	Developers may be concerned about the town's approval processes in terms of time required and complexity
Hotel or B&B	Another building in town with light manufacturers is not filled
Residential units for people over 50; possibly on second floor with shops on first floor	Affordable housing component as 10% of residential build-out
Grocery store / supermarket	Junk in backyards of adjacent residences
Office space for home-based businesses to expand into when they need to grow	Steep river banks
Pharmacy plus medical related businesses	Sewer access for reuse of office building and building near dam
Once highest and best uses are identified, town should pre-permit the site for those uses	Subterranean tunnels
Site would show better (to prospective buyers/users) if many of the vacant blighted buildings were taken down	Difficulty in obtaining financing for private developers
Overlay district is a huge plus	
Residential with the New England small town, old style motif of Main Street; taking advantage of the river vistas and large land area	
Extension of Main St. type businesses	
Artists live/work apartments/condos; or artists studio space	
Quaint, small scale stores in old-fashioned setting for arts/crafts/jewelry/collectibles/antiques as well as gift shop, sentimental items, personal items, "last minute" items	
Completion of covered bridge will create huge historic tourism draw to area; mill site should include history of mill	

Leverage “shop local” demand in the area and desire for quality goods, relationships with store owners and buying something different (not at malls)	
Five points of access; four on Mill St., one on Main St.	
Three buildings potentially salvageable and desirable—brick building on corner near residences and nearby Main St; old office building on Main St.; brick building on corner of site facing dam and river	
Possible reuse of tall silver stack as iconic symbol for site	
Site has river water rights	
Possible Joint Venture opportunity between owner and developer who would do build-out, marketing, management on a cost plus commission basis as opposed to seeking an equity position; or developer that would work with owner on a fee for service basis	

**Discussion with Mill Site Study Committee  
3/11/09**

Attendees:

Committee Members  
Stephanie Cronin  
Albert Harris  
Michael Landino  
Matt Nesbit  
Ronald Karr  
Georgette Rogers  
Jeff Sauer  
Joseph Sergi  
Stephen Themelis

And also Selectman Patrick McNabb

A discussion with the Mill Site Committee identified the following key Opportunities and Concerns/Constraints/Issues for the Mill Site:

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Concerns/Constraints/Issues</b>
Restaurant-brewpub, microbrewery; sit-down service	Declining school enrollment projections may mean less need for youth oriented activities; at the same time there does not seem to be enough places for young people to “hang out”
Assisted Living Facility along with Alzheimer’s care Daycare for kids and seniors Senior Apartments	Environmental concerns
Community Center	Visibility of site; small Main St. frontage—how to open it up
Tie the site together with the river, the trail and the downtown Possible bridge over the river to connect the site to the trail as a branch off of trail	Amount of SF available at the site may limit commercial uses within the context of a balanced group of uses and possible open space
Use the site to create a downtown renaissance	Intersection of Mill St. and Main St. may need to be re-engineered
Unique <u>destination</u> retail like the VT Country Store (no chain retail)	Businesses generally should be more oriented to servicing the townspeople as opposed to being an attraction to draw outsiders

Leverage opportunity like the National River Watershed Association in Groton with its 11,000 people per year getting educated there	Any draw to the area has consequences such as increased traffic
Sporting Goods retail possibility	Distance from major roadways
Leverage any advantage in MA laws vs. NH laws such as the meal tax differential	Riverbank is too steep and rough for (canoe) access
Health Club/Fitness Center	Town needs to allow liquor licenses (beyond beer and wine) to encourage restaurants
Open Space should be integrated into the site and the overall aesthetic should be attractive	Parking availability on site
Recreation/Park use	
Move uses from industrial park that reflect underutilization of that site to the mill site-- such as gym type uses	
Other light industrial uses may be appropriate like a small auto body shop— uses that are not high traffic generators	
Medical / Professional Offices	
Coffee Shop to attract trail users	
Site has utilities available	
An attractive mill site will enhance the adjacent residential neighborhood	
Save some key aspects of the site to highlight its historic past—not necessarily going so far as a museum	
Completion of nearby covered bridge may attract tourists	
Nearby conservation land may provide overlook potential	
Hotel or Bed & Breakfast with possible conference facilities	
Ecotourism possibility	
Leverage town's other resources like skydiving school, soccer tournament, horse farms, farmer's market	
Off the beaten path	
Need for function room space	
Possible music group (jazz) venue as part of restaurant, inn, etc.	

Retain access to river with a trail or benches for the use of the whole community	
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