

DISTRIBUTE FEB 17, 2015
TO WILMSTON ECON DEV. COMMITTEE 1

*A proposal for the old town garage site to anchor Water Street
for economic development between Cable Mills and Main Street*

*by design developer Joan Simpson Burns and Westall Architects**

This is not an affordable housing project. It is an economic development project, but it is more than that. It is a Williamstown project at a time when the town has substantially either lost or is about to lose Spring Street.

For the moment we can put aside what the college is planning to do except that we are not required to continue the use of a land lot for their parking. We want to conserve our land and at the same time promote economic development. Economic development – a long time goal that hasn't yet been fulfilled in Williamstown. This project will be a wonderful start. It will transform Water Street, as will Cable Mills.

The town is singularly fortunate in not having sold off the old town garage site. It is prime property, located in the center of town. This project enables us to hold on to it while at the same time financially benefitting from it in a number of ways.

What we are proposing is this: four luxury townhouses and two bonded stores all paying taxes. If desirable, a small, two story parking garage in back shared by the housing tenants and perhaps by the college cars that have been parking in the now empty lot. If the college wants to maintain parking there they should contribute financially to this aspect of the plan.

But here is a vital new idea: the development in front of the apartments and stores of a civic space incorporating the already proposed new sidewalks and street lamps along Water Street to Cable Mills.

* You are all probably familiar with the excellent work accomplished by Dave Westall's fine, local architectural firm. You may not know that Joan Simpson Burns was design and project manager for the Old Farm Way subdivision, a million dollar enterprise that returned 75% profit.

What do we mean by civic space? Please see the attached site plan.

The intent is to create a large area, a patio, with outdoor tables and chairs freely available to the public and fronting directly on Water Street along with two incorporated stores.

Suggested stores: on the right , a new Slippery Banana. How many of you remember the enormously successful Spring Street fresh grocery store by that name. It has been greatly missed. On the left. a high-end quality restaurant with cuisine not currently represented in our town (perhaps French?) These two stores can and perhaps should be run by the same management with the restaurant using the fresh greens and vegetables and fruit needs from next door. We have some businesses in mind to contact.

The tables and chairs outside on the patio (civic space) will aid both of these stores, with the restaurant offering to serve meals outside. The Slippery Banana's supplying of fresh fruits and vegetables might constitute something of a more permanent continuation of the farmer's market on Spring Street. The patio will serve as a public space with business ventures. People who come to grocery shop can also sit in front on the patio. People can walk from Cable Mills for fresh groceries or they can walk to any of the restaurants already on the street. (Remember that new sidewalk with lights.) Citizens and tourists and students can bring their own food, look around, go to Linear Park across the way, or just sit and talk. It will be a new civic center at a time when we are rapidly losing Spring Street to the college, accessible and visible in a way the Paresky plaza is not. We propose a cart on the open patio selling all varieties of drinks, salads, sandwiches in warm weather – somewhat like the food available occasionally from a van on Spring Street but not a van, set up adjacent to the Slippery Banana or the restaurant.

The apartments in back of the two stores on either side will be town houses, so that the main part of the building will be two stories high, more or less in keeping with the village height of houses currently in the area. The two housing wings will be joined in the back by a large entry atrium two stories high, with a staircase and an elevator and a lounge area for tenants and their visitors. This entry is tied to parking – possibly a small parking garage -- behind the building. Tenants can also access from the patio in front where a small decorative metal gate is kept closed. The area between the two wings will serve as a garden for the tenants. The patio itself will have attractive vegetation. There will be a road in from the street to the right of the buildings, where

there is a road now. A parking area will be created for use by grocery store and restaurant patrons.

The stores on either side in front will be one story high, with decks on the store roofs to be accessed from the second floors of the townhouses. As for the townhouses, they will be luxurious, with every modern convenience geared to visitors or tenants who want to be in the center of town, have some kind of sense of life in their area, and can afford to pay – perhaps wealthy young people.

This private development, if properly done, will not cost the town's citizens a dime. It will generate additional taxes and new employment. We propose that the town not give or sell this valuable property but, rather, do the sort of land lease that the college has done with Pine Cobble and that has been common in England. In other words, allow use of the land while still retaining it. Leases can be written for the term a developer needs – some in England were for a hundred years – and at a yearly rental pegged to the developer's financial structure – even if it is only a dollar a year. (I had this arrangement for some of my land.)

We want to create a new and much more interesting civic space that mimics the inviting civic spaces in Europe and that will foster Williamstown's economic development with start-ups along an improved Water Street. To push forward the resurrection of our town apart from the college. And then, of course, to provide a long-suggested walkway between Spring and Water streets to foster both.

WESTALL Architects

David J. Westall, R.A. & Principal

Prior to establishing his own firm Mr. Westall worked for Ekstrom/Nijhuis, Inc. in North Adams, MA as an Architectural Draftsman / Designer where he was a draftsman and designer of residential, commercial, and public projects.

Mr. Westall was later employed by Williams College, Williamstown, MA as the Assistant Director for Architectural Services serving as designer, draftsman, specifier, and construction supervisor of new construction, additions, alterations, and renovations of College projects.

Reach David at:



James J. Leitch, Senior Designer, LEED-AP

Mr. Leitch joined the firm in 2002 with 30 years of experience in the construction industry and extensive work with building codes and zoning regulations. He began his career designing for Robert B. Deloye, Architect/Engineer in Pittsfield, MA. He has managed development and construction of numerous projects with both public and private sector funding. At Westall Architects his work with Computer-Aided Design and Drafting includes virtual three-dimensional modeling and rendering.



Reach Jim at:

Bruce P. Hake, Project Manager

Mr. Hake joined the firm in 2001 after 10 years with Trudeau Architects of Latham, NY. His experience also includes employment with Hallock Architects of Pittsfield and Timothy D. Smith & Associates of North Bennington, VT. As Project Manager, Mr. Hake is responsible for design team coordination and managing client communication, focusing on issues of budget, scheduling, quality control, preparation of project specifications, and construction contract administration.

Reach Bruce at:



Carmel Kushi

Ms. Kushi has performed free-lance field dimensioning and drafting of existing condition plans for Westall Architects since 2007. She joined the firm in 2010 and continues to provide such services as well as providing administrative support functions.

Reach Carmel at:



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