

PLANNING PROCESS

Introduction

The redevelopment vision for the Stillwater Mill Redevelopment District is the result of two public planning sessions. The first planning session was undertaken in 2001 and resulted in the formulation of a Master Plan that was adopted by the Burrillville Town Council in March of 2001. The second planning session was undertaken in 2003 and involved 3 public planning sessions. The result of this process was the further refinement of the Master Plan to reflect additional market information and proposed development projects. The final Master Plan incorporates a considerable amount of public input and; therefore, arguably reflects the desire of the abutters and general public. The following outlines the process and results of these two public planning initiatives.

Master Planning Initiative #1

Funded by the Austin T. Levy Foundation, the Town of Burrillville initiated a planning process to develop a Master Plan for the reuse of the Stillwater Mill site. The Town's goals for the redevelopment process of the Mill Complex are as follows.

- Identify the best future use or uses of the site and buildings based on the Complex's location in the Village of Harrisville, and the community's desire to create employment opportunities.
- Preserve the historic buildings and propose their rehabilitation so they may be used to their maximum capacity.
- Reintegrate the Mill Complex with the Village of Harrisville through the development of vehicular and pedestrian routes. Consider improving the access points to the Mill Complex.
- Consider the linkage between the Mill Complex and Bronco's Highway through the development of the Railroad right of way.
- Emphasize the property's historic linkage to the Clear River. Possible ideas may include the development of a linear park and or the creation of public open space on the site.
- Incorporate the public's views on how the complex should be revitalized.
- Estimate the cost of rehabilitating the complex. Include the permitting or regulatory requirements for the suggested rehabilitation.

The Master Planning process entailed three public hearings. The objectives of these public hearings were (1) understand the history of the mill complex, (2) solicit input on what type of reuses were acceptable, (3) develop, review and refine a reuse concept, and (4) present the reuse concept to the Burrillville Town

Council for approval. All public meetings were well attended and provided the consultants with a general direction for the development of the Master Plan.

The development of the reuse concept or Master Plan also included involvement from the Town Planning Department and a Design (steering) Committee. The Design Committee, made up of local residents, was established to guide the development of the plan. The consultant team held numerous meetings to gain input from the above mentioned groups.

Suggested uses for the site included senior housing, municipal uses (Town Hall expansion and library), a senior center, small business incubator, health center, and open space for a farmers market and craft fair. Large chain stores, heavy industrial businesses and companies producing a lot of traffic were discouraged by the public.

To develop a preliminary Master Plan, the consultant team met to develop preliminary design ideas and improvements for the project area. Two design options were developed and presented to the Design Committee. Their comments and suggestions shaped the development of the preliminary Master Plan.

A second public meeting was held to present the two options for the rehabilitation of the Stillwater Mill Complex. Active participation from the public resulted in a suggestion for one option and modifications to that option. Based on input from the public, the Master Plan was narrowed to one revised option. This plan (Exhibit II and Exhibit III) was reviewed by the Design Committee and then presented to the public at a third meeting. The plan was approved by the public and was officially presented at a public hearing with the Town Council. The effort culminated with the Council's approval and acceptance of the plan at their following meeting on May 23, 2001.

Master Planning Initiative #2

Although considerable amount of public input was provided as a result of the Master Planning Initiative #1, the Burrillville Redevelopment Agency decided to undertake the Master Planning Initiative #2. The Burrillville Redevelopment Agency's decision to undertake the second master planning initiative was based on the following factors.

- The Master Planning Session #1 occurred prior to the commencement of Town efforts to establish a redevelopment agency and select the Stillwater Mill site as a prospective redevelopment district. Therefore, the Master Planning Initiative #2 was undertaken to conform to the public input requirements of RIGL Title 45, Chapters 32 to 38.
- The Town of Burrillville had entered into numerous discussions with The Community Builders; a not for profit company that specializes in the development

of affordable housing. The Community Builders were proposing the development of an elderly housing project in the Redevelopment District on Lot 204. Furthermore, The Community Builders had undertaken a market study in conjunction with their preliminary interest in redeveloping the Clock Tower Building for residential use. The activities of The Community Builders were significant and, therefore, the public needed to be informed of these activities and their impact on the Master Plan developed as a result of Session #1.

Three public meetings were held in conjunction with the Master Planning Initiative #2. The first public meeting reviewed the master plan developed as a result of Master Planning Initiative #1. The public was also informed of the proposed projects and activities of The Community Builders. The first public meeting also allowed the public to provide additional input regarding the previously prepared Master Plan and to respond to the proposed projects and activities of The Community Builders. The second and third public meetings entailed the presentation of revisions to the Master Plan and the solicitation of additional public response to these revisions. The agendas for each of these public meetings are included in Addendum III.

As a result of the Master Planning Initiative #2, the Master Plan was amended in six areas: (1) egress and ingress to the Stillwater Mill site; (2) amount and location of proposed parking improvements; (3) reuse of the Clock Tower building; (4) scope of library/municipal complex, (5) proposed development on Lot 204; and (6) inclusion of additional residential and mixed-use structures. Figure IV and Figure V are two options for the amended Master Plan. Figure IV (Option A) reflects the envisioned redevelopment of the site assuming the continued use of Lot 63 and Lot 64 by UFO Distribution Corporation. Figure V (Option B) reflects the envisioned redevelopment of the site including the demolition and redevelopment of the UFO Distribution Corporation property. Based on presentations and conclusions made during the Master Planning Initiative #2, Option B represents the Preferred Redevelopment Option. Option B optimizes traffic circulation, aesthetic value and overall integrity of the Stillwater Mill Redevelopment Plan. Option A was developed during the Master Planning Initiative #2 to assess whether the exclusion of the UFO property from redevelopment would render the redevelopment plan unviable. The determination was that the redevelopment plan remains viable without the redevelopment of the UFO property. Nevertheless, the Stillwater Mill Redevelopment District Redevelopment Plan identifies Option B as the preferred and best approach to revitalizing the redevelopment district and surrounding areas.