REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE PHOTECH (STATION MILL) SITE

An Environmental Planning Project
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1. Executive Summary

The historic Photech Mill, situated at the junction of Cole Avenue and the Hoosic River, is both a symbol of the neighborhood's vibrant past and a linchpin for meeting current and future community needs through progressive redevelopment. The Photech site presents Williamstown with an extraordinary opportunity to consider how this unique site can be redeveloped in a way that will provide benefits to its immediate residents for generations, strengthen the ties within the community, and generate positive returns for Williamstown. After the partial roof collapse of the main building this past summer, there is a sense of increased urgency to secure funding to remove the collapsed materials, which are still contaminated with asbestos, and move forward with this project. Our goal was to provide a redevelopment proposal that could help begin this process and even guide the future.

With specific instructions from our client, Town Manager Peter Fohlin, to propose a redevelopment plan that is economically feasible, we gathered current market prices to put estimated numbers on our final site plan. The proposal itself included a site plan and a set of recommendations that we developed from our research, which included a community survey. Our study indicated that recreation on the site with river access is the highest prioritized use for the site. Housing, especially affordable, was a second major priority, while commercial activity and historic preservation were third and fourth, respectively. Based on the results of our survey, and considering Williamstown's needs as set out by the Master Plan, we are optimistic that the Photech site can incorporate many of the uses residents expressed hopes to see in an integrated mixed-use redevelopment plan. We believe it is crucial to take advantage of the site's location by providing access to the Hoosic River and to create a recreation area that can also serve to mitigate the environmental impact of any development on this site. Developing the front portion

of the site facing Cole Avenue as a pedestrian-oriented, mixed affordable and market rate housing with commercial activity will meet part of Williamstown's need for affordable housing and expand its tax base.

Perhaps most importantly, the redevelopment process should include community input, especially in its earlier stages. The eventual redeveloped Photech site should be compatible with the immediate neighborhood and its physical design should reflect the integration of the site into the community. Throughout the course of our study, we were encouraged by the community interest and desire to see this site bring in a project that could bring positive and progressive change to Williamstown.

2. Project Objectives and Scope

There are two overarching objectives that we kept in mind throughout the entirety of the project: 1) Meeting the goals of our client, Peter Fohlin, the Williamstown Town Manager. Our task was to conduct a feasibility study for a redevelopment plan on the Photech Mill Site, drawing upon information from the market. Mr. Fohlin did express a preference for housing, given Williamstown's need for especially affordable housing, but emphasized that the project should at least be economically viable. 2) Be conscientious and responsible environmental planners for Williamstown. Therefore, we referred to the long-term visions laid out in the Master Plan and attempted a creative response to integrate community needs and environmental concerns.

Given these broader parameters, we further identified several community values meant to benefit the community that guided the course of this feasibility study. These were affordable housing, economic revitalization, local historical preservation, and recreation in various forms including riverfront access, green space, and a public park. The importance of these goals to

Williamstown have been outlined in the Master Plan, as well as in the identification of Photech as a "key site" upon which "higher density uses within the town center" can be realized.[1] As an integral part of meeting these objectives, we also identified funding sources.

Since we worked with a specific location, the site itself defined the scope of our project. That is, we did not attempt to address, for example, the larger problem of affordable housing in Williamstown, but instead worked towards incorporating the need for affordable housing successfully on this site. Ultimately, we hoped to integrate all the factors – community preferences, regulatory constraints, environmental considerations, and economic feasibility – into a proposal that would bring long-term benefits to the Williamstown community. Our final proposal will consist of a site map from which Williamstown residents can begin visualizing what a redeveloped site could look like and a set of final recommendations that can provide direction for future redevelopment plans on this site.

3. Methods

Background Research

The first set of data we gathered was background information on all relevant policies for affordable housing as well as market-priced housing, economic activities suitable for walkable communities, riverfront access, and preservation of historical and cultural sites. This information was compiled through personal contacts, which gave us the necessary numbers and gave us perspective on state and local initiatives and policies. We also attended meetings and talked to representatives from citizen and local government groups such as the Hoosic River Watershed Association, Williamstown Housing Task Force, Williamstown Planning Board, Williamstown Conservation Commission, and Berkshire Housing Corporation. Many people

[1] "Williamstown Master Plan: Final Report and Recommendations," Williamstown Master Plan Steering Committee, (December 2000), 37.

who work in Williamstown Town Hall, including Director/Inspector of Buildings Michael Card, Town Assessor William Barkin, Town Manager Peter Fohlin, and Administrative Assistant Kathy Poirot, were very helpful in assisting us throughout our project.

Simultaneously, we examined the site to determine the physical contours and features that would influence our final site plan. Through on-site field work, history of the site, and meetings with the town assessor, Bill Barkin, and building inspector, Mike Card, we were able to ascertain the basic layout of the site as a starting point for coming up with a site plan. With assistance, we created a collection of basic GIS maps to organize pertinent site information, such as the flood plains, the current zones, the overlay districts, and existing infrastructures including the pathway of the sewer easement.

Community Preferences

We then conducted a survey in order to assess the immediate and larger community's perceptions, preferences, and needs as they pertain to future use of this site. We also looked at Master Plan Steering Committee's recommendations in order to assess additional community needs that were not addressed in our community survey.

Financial Analysis

Finally, we applied some estimated market prices for housing, recreational facilities, and businesses in order to approximate the costs for our final proposal. Developers who have done affordable housing in the Berkshires, such Peter Lafayette from the Berkshire Housing Corporation, real estate agents, such as Don Westall and Paul Harsch, were invaluable resources in providing numbers for this aspect of the research.

4. Community Description

Ever since the construction of the station mill building in 1865, it has been a central feature for the surrounding community. Established in 1865, the "station mill" (so named for its proximity to the town railroad depot) was the largest construction project to date in Williamstown, and housed at times an integrated process of spinning wool and weaving it into textiles.[2] Such a large mill required a large industrial work force, one which was unavailable in Williamstown at the time. To solve the labor problem, the Williamstown Manufacturing Company did what many New England mill owners were doing at the time: imported a Quebecois workforce. The workers, of course, needed homes; so between 1865 and 1867 the Williamstown Manufacturing Company built twenty six houses, mostly double tenements, alongside the mill. These houses, built on about 13 acres, on Arnold Street, Mill Street, and the Northern ends of Elm Street and Cole Avenue remain a unique remnant in Williamstown a typical 19th century style of residential development.[3]

[2] Crowley-Delman, John P. "Unwanted History: Williamstown, 'the Village Beautiful' and its Station Mill," (unpublished Williams College senior thesis , 2001) p. 18
[3] Mill Village Historic District Application, on file at Williamstown House of Local History, section 7.

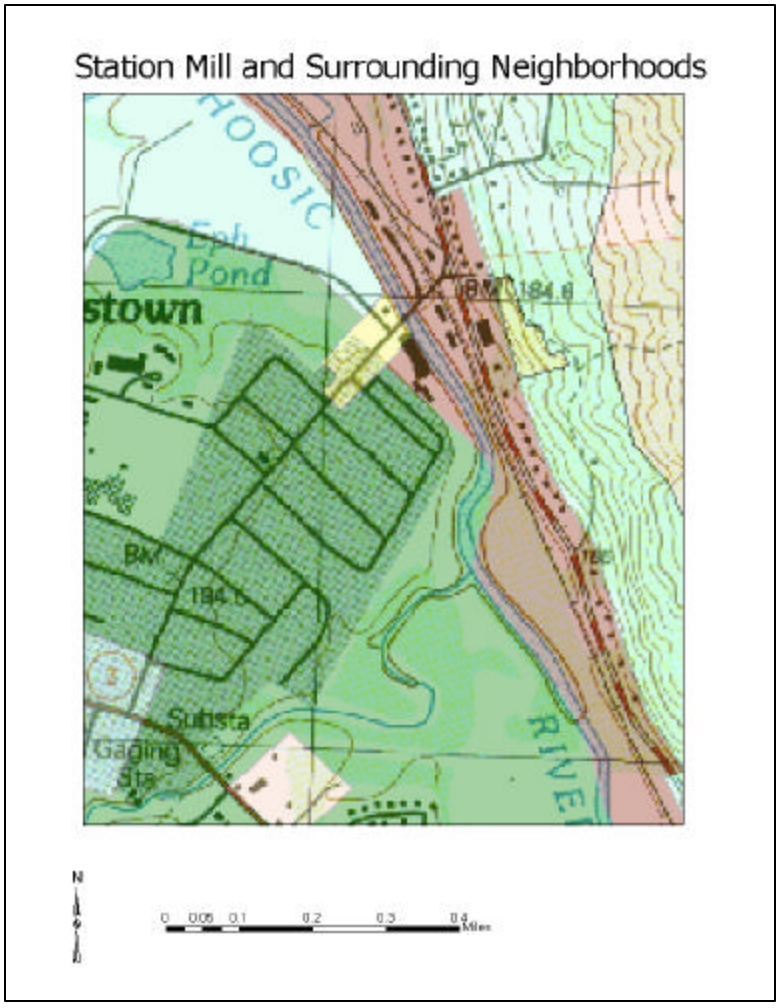


Figure 1: *A map of the Station Mill and surrounding neighborhoods. The mill can be seen on the intersection of Cole Ave. and The Hoosic River. Its northern edge is located in the yellow, business zone, while the rest of the building lies in what is currently zoned limited industrial. Directly to the South of the mill building is the historic mill village neighborhood. The two closest streets, running diagonally northwest and southeast are Mill and Arnold. The two important cross streets are Cole Ave and Elm St.*

To ensure that the basic needs of the community would be met conveniently, the company built a park, a school, and two stores.[4] In the 1880s, six more single and double houses were built by workers who purchased company land that had previously been used for a park, football field, and grazing area.[5]

[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.* Item number 7, page 2.

The height of prosperity for the station mill neighborhood occurred at the end of the 19th century. The station mill was doing well economically, the workers had been in the area for almost a generation, and the rail yard was doing heavy business. At the turn of the century a person standing on the Cole Avenue bridge looking South would have found, within a short walking distance, a grocery store, a bakery, a drug store, a barber shop, two boarding houses and other neighborhood necessities.[6] Since most of the residents were Catholic French Canadians, with a different background, religion, and language, from the New England Protestants who lived in the rest of Williamstown, the Station Mill district remained relatively self-contained into the 20th century.[7] In 1929 the textile factory went out of business. Ten years later it was purchased by Gervaerte Company, a Belgian photographic paper manufacturer, which brought Belgian workers in to fill some of the tenements.[8] In 1986 the mill was bought by Photech, which abandoned the site three years later, leaving the workers without a job and the neighborhood without a hub.[9]

Today, 14 years after the mill building was abandoned, the basic structure of the neighborhood looks much as it must have in the 1890s. The neighborhood remains one of the more affordable areas in Williamstown, probably due to the uniformity of the architecture, historical uses, and double occupancy. Most of the houses in the station mill district are valued at around $80,000.[10] Most of the residents, though, are renters, who pay about $500 a month.[11] Even the Station Mill neighborhood is experiencing the rise in Williamstown real estate,

[6]Brooke, David S. "One of the Best Business Houses in Town" in *Williamstown House of Local History News*, November 1999 (vol IV no. 2)
[7] Crowley-Delman, p. 60
[8] *Ibid*. p. 62
[9] *Ibid* p. 64
[10] Interview with Bill Barkin, town assessor. Conducted by Carlos Silva, 10/22/03
[11] *Ibid*.

however, with a house in the area recently selling for about $350,000.[12] The nature of the neighborhood and character of the houses would make gentrification of the area a difficult undertaking. It would probably require significant changes in the houses adjacent to the station mill. True gentrification of the neighborhood homes, then, most likely will not occur in the near future, securing at least part of Williamstown for people who aren't interested in estate style second homes. In fact, the neighborhood surrounding the Station Mill site is one of the more densely developed areas in the town of Williamstown. There are nearly 200 households in the historic mill community alone, plus other single family residences extending in all directions from the site. With an almost urban concentration of people in the neighborhood, any development created in the public interest would be almost certainly be highly utilized.

While the neighborhood is largely residential, there a few shops there as well, most notably Leo's Luncheonette, the Spirit Shoppe and Deli Station, and the Women's Exchange. These businesses, however, do not comprise anything that resembles the commercial center the neighborhood had 100 years ago, but the potential for more commercial development is certainly there. With both residential and commercial zones in one small area, adding more business space on the station mill site would not be very disruptive to the neighborhood, and would in fact serve a vital role of linking the businesses that already exist on Cole in a solid line of development.

Historically, the station mill neighborhood was one of the main centers of life in Williamstown. While it currently suffers from the abandonment of the mill building by Photech, there is strong potential for the station mill neighborhood to be an important economic center of town. With proper planning, what was once a vibrant site can once again be an important part of Williamstown.

[12] Interview with Anita Barker and Bob Buckwalter Of the Williamston Affordable Housing Authority, 10/21/03.

5. Site History

Started in 1865, the construction of the mill along the Hoosic River at Cole Avenue marked the beginning of the Industrial era in Williamstown.[13] Built in red brick with a 21,000 square foot foundation, what came to be known as the Station Mill was also by far the largest building constructed to date in Williamstown.[14] For the Williamstown Mill Company, and one of its larger stockholders, Williams College President Paul A. Chadbourne, the mill was more than a way to supplement his presidential salary; it was a symbol of progress and technological advancement.[15] Like many in the second half of the 19th century, Chadbourne saw the leaps and bounds that were being made in the fields of industry, transportation, and communication as a sign of endless future possibilities to achieve an improved world for all. All the partners in the mill looked forward to the day when the railroad would puff its way into Williamstown, hoping that it would allow them to sell their goods to more markets at a lower price. In 1875 the partners got their wish.[16] Unfortunately for the Williamstown Mill Company, the railroad did have the desired effect, at least for producers in Boston, who were able to undersell the Williamstown mill and drive it out of business. In 1876, only 11 years after construction began on the mill, Chadbourne and his partners were forced by financial difficulties to sell the mill to Albert Houghton, an industrialist from nearby Adams.[17]

A shrewd businessman whose only job was running mills, Houghton's tenure as owner of the station mill was for the most part quite prosperous. Realizing that he had to find a way to keep his prices below those of the Boston manufacturers, Houghton bought a group of four mills

[13] Crowley-Delman, p. 18
[14] *Ibid*.
[15] *Ibid*. pp. 30-37
[16] *Ibid*. p. 25
[17] *Ibid*. p. 43

in northern Berkshire County.[18] With this combination, he was able to convert raw cotton into manufactured goods entirely in mills owned by him. Houghton's vertical integration brought him great wealth and prosperity as well as bringing some security to the lives of the workers he employed. The textile business at the turn of the century, however, was a competitive business. In 1906 Houghton, attempting to corner the market, purchased an enormous amount of cotton.[19] To his dismay, though, the bottom fell out of the cotton market the next year, and he was stuck with large debts and warehouses full of cotton. As a result, Houghton sold the station mill in 1910 to the Greylock Mills Company.[20]

Greylock Mills would prove to be the last owners of the station mill as a producer of textiles. Changes in the United States economy made large scale textile production in New England towns, an already competitive field, even less lucrative. The stock market crash of 1929 was more than Greylock Mills could handle. In 1933 the Station Mill site was put up in auction and sold for $31,200.[21] For most of the Great Depression the Station Mill, which had produced textiles on the banks of the Hoosic almost without interruption for over 60 years, was empty.

One might call the year 1939 a time of resurrection for the station mill. A Belgian photographic paper firm, Gervaerte Company, bought the site and refitted it for the production of light sensitive material.[22] While work did resume in the mill, the body of the building resembled an almost Frankensteinian version of its past self. To protect the photographic paper, the new owners sealed all of the windows with cinderblocks to prevent the infiltration of light. They also added a large 5,580 square foot building on the end of the building that today is referred to as

[18] *Ibid*.
[19] Cole, *Between Two Worlds*, in Crowley-Delman p. 48
[20] Powell, *Another Williamstown* in Crowley-Delman p. 50
[21] "Greylock Mill Property Brings $31,200 At Sale" *North Adams Evening Transcript* June 3, 1933
[22] Crowley-Delman, p. 62

"the cube."[23] While they did attempt to build in the style of the old building, at least in so far as they used red bricks, the large, square monolith on the end of the station mill holds within it much of what went wrong with twentieth century architecture. The construction of "the cube" employed a method of steel post and beam construction that was unavailable to the builders of the original mill.[24] With building supports concentrated on small pillars, the builders were able to fill the walls with large, lime green ceramic bricks that hold no weight but only partition rooms. Windows were largely ignored both to protect the light sensitive paper and also because the technology of artificial fluorescent light made natural light obsolete.

The station mill was purchased and sold by a small string of photographic paper companies throughout the middle of the twentieth century. The last owners of the mill, Photech, purchased it in 1986.[25] What exactly their intention was remains somewhat of a mystery. As early as 1988 they were seriously entertaining offers to sell the mill to be redeveloped into luxury apartments. The deal, however, never went through. Various reasons are cited for the failure of redevelopment in 1988. The town did not want apartments built at the time, and the developer ran out of money before he built anything anyway. With an old mill building on their hands and a $600,000 debt to Williamstown, the owners of Photech abandoned the mill without warning.[26] One morning in November, 1989, the workers showed up to Photech and found that all of the owners had fled.[27]

With the disappearance of the owners, the Photech site quickly went from a focal point of the station mill community to a brownfield site. Although the town had the right to repossess the

[23] Tighe & Bond, Inc., "Draft Phase I – Initial Site Investigation and Tier Classification," September, 2000, in Crowley-Delman p. 62
[24] Mike Card, class field trip, October 2003
[25] Crowley-Delman, p. 62
[26] *Ibid.* p. 65
[27] *Ibid.* p. 64

land from its owners to cover their debts, town officials did not want to burden themselves with the legal liability for site cleanup. With absentee owners and a town afraid to touch it, the 125 year old mill quickly fell into a state of dilapidation. In 1991 the real trouble started when a leak was discovered in the roof.[28] If it had been fixed immediately the building could have been salvaged, but by 1995 the leak was still there, causing Historic Massachusetts Inc. to put it on their state 10 Most Endangered Historic Resources list.[29] Various proposals to fix the problem were entertained by the Selectboard, but still nothing was done, and the only option left was demolition.[30]

In July 1997 the EPA came to the Photech Mill, and the site became the target of a federal cleanup.[31] Samples from the soil, 55-gallon drums found on-site, and wastewater revealed high levels of toxic substances. With no traceable owners to sue for liability, $495,000 was authorized for cleanup out of the Superfund.[32] By February, 1988, 188 tons of contaminated waste, 40 cubic yards of asbestos, and 40,000 gallons of contaminated wastewater were removed from the site by the EPA.[33]

With a newly cleaned site, the town's next task became demolition. With no allocation in the town budget for demolition of old mills, Williamstown had to look elsewhere for funding. Even after a veto by Governor Celucci, the state House of Representatives and Senate authorized $750,000 for the demolition project.[34] During research for demolition, however, more site pollution was found, so the money that had been earmarked for demolition instead went to

[28] Interview with Mike Card from Crowley-Denim p. 71
[29] Crowley-Delman p. 71
[30] *Ibid*. p. 78
[31] Eileen E. Flynn "EPA approves $500,000 for Photec Cleanup," *North Adams Transcript*, October 11, 1997 in Crowley-Delman, p. 78
[32] *Ibid*. p. 79
[33] Lisi De Bourbon, "Superfund cleanup completed at Photec Site in Williamstown," *Berkshire Eagle*, Pittsfield, Feb 12, 1998. In Crowley-Delman, p. 80
[34] "David R. Guarino, "MCLA, BCC take hits; Bosley not confident on override possibility," *North Adams Transcript*, Nov. 17, 1999 in Crowley-Delman p. 81

further cleanup.[35] Some developers did show an interest in possible renovation of the site, but an analysis by UMASS wood technology expert Stephen Smulski showed that the building was "unsalvageable."[36]

By the late 1990s, the life of the building was drawing to a close. The only question remaining was how soon the building would collapse. The town still did not have the money to pay for demolition, so once again they looked to the EPA. In October, 2003, the outlook for a $1 million site cleanup from the EPA seemed promising. [37] Unfortunately, the funds were not available in the fall of 2003. The site does qualify for EPA demolition funds, however, and there is still hope that it will be demolished in 2004.[38] Once the building is removed, barring any more toxic surprises, the town will have a large vacant lot in what was once a historic center of town.

6. Physical Site Description

The Photech Mill site consists of a roughly 10 acre parcel of land owned by the town of Williamstown at the north end of Cole Avenue. Bordering to the immediate north of the site is the Hoosic River. Abutting the property to the south and west is a residential neighborhood, and to the east is an extension of Linear Park, which is owned by the town (see figure 2). The site is zoned Limited Industrial. It includes 2 existing buildings, a large paved parking lot, and a large section of open space to the eastern end of the property that used to house chemical storage tanks (figure 2). Both buildings have been vacant since 1989.

[35] Rob Colenso, Jr., "Williamstown may have to fund another study of Photec site," *Berkshire Eagle*, Jan 26, 2000 from Crowley-Delman p. 83
[36] John M. Krol "Expert to analyze Photec; board supports question 9," *North Adams Transcript*, Oct 24, 2000
[37] Interview with Peter Fohlin, Oct 24, 2003
[38] Email conversation between Pete Endres and Michael Barry, On-Scene coordinator, EPA New England. December 5, 2003.

Figure 2: *Aerial photograph of the Photech site showing bordering Hoosic River and residential neighborhood. Buildings 1 and 2 are labeled. Buildings marked with "x" have been demolished since the photo was taken. Roof collapse in building 1 is also more recent than photo.*

Building 1, the largest of the buildings, is a three story building with a gross floor area of 67,040 square feet[39] (figures 3 and 4). The exterior of the building is entirely brick, but support for the flooring and building in general is mostly wood. In August of 2003, the center most portion of Building 1 collapsed due to significant weather damage to the building's supporting beams (figure 4). The collapse took out the southern side of the building as material fell, but the north side of the building is still standing precariously. Collapse of the north side could send

[39] *Photech Manufacturing Plant site description*. Prepared by the town of Williamstown. Undated document, but completed after 1994.

debris (possibly contaminated with asbestos) into the Hoosic River.

Figure 3: *Photograph of Building 1 looking toward eastern end of site. At near left is the gatehouse.*

Figure 4: *Photograph of Building 1 looking west showing extent of roof collapse.*

Building 2, also known as the "Cube," was built as an addition to Building 1 in 1941 and is directly connected on the east side. It is a four story structure with a gross floor area of 27,900 square feet[40] (figures 5 and 6). It is an extremely durable building supported by reinforced concrete. The floors themselves are also concrete, and the exterior walls are brick. Like Building 1, Building 2 has a wooden roof, but unlike Building 1 the building is still very much intact and structurally sound.

Figures 5 (left) and 6 (right) : *Photographs of Building 2, or the "Cube."*

[40] *ibid*, p. 2

Due to the storage of chemicals at the site and the presence of asbestos in the walls of Building 1, the Environmental Protection Agency listed the property as hazardous in the 1990's. Since then, extensive cleanup has been carried out. Storage drums have been removed and underground concrete tanks have been cleaned to a point where the soil is now considered clean. Further, the EPA effectively completed asbestos removal in Building 1 in June 2003, just prior to its collapse.

Though the site has been vacant for over a decade, it still has access to basic utilities such as sewer, water and electric. These utilities could be easily reconnected to any development on the site.

7. Project History

A year prior to abandonment of the Photech site in 1989, the Photech Corporation had negotiated the sale of the property to Michael Capizzi as part of a deal with Williamstown officials to pay off mounting utility and property tax debts[41]. Capizzi, a Boston-based developer, had recently completed the renovation of the Berkshire Mill in nearby Adams. Similar to the main factory at Photech, the Berkshire Mill was a four-story factory that Capizzi transformed into 3 stories of luxury apartments (60 units total) with a ground floor designated for commercial space (figures 7 and 8). In 1989, Capizzi presented a similar plan for development of the Photech site. With it, he helped address Williamstown's significant lack of affordable housing by calling for at least ten percent of new apartments in the Photech Mill to be classified as "affordable."[42]

[41] Crowley-Delman, John P., *Unwanted History: Williamstown, "The Village Beautiful," and its Station Mill*. Williams College thesis in History. 2001.
[42] *Ibid*, p. 70

Figures 7 (left) and 8 (right): *Photographs of building 1 at Photech (left) and the renovated Berkshire Mill in Adams (right). Both mill buildings were built in the 1800's and have similar construction and appearance. Both photos taken in 2003.*

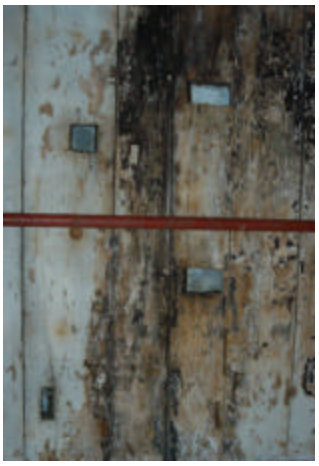
Despite some good intentions, town residents and officials met Capizzi's plan with apprehension and anxiety. In the context of the Pine Cobble subdivision being completed the same year, where public concern was raised over the environmental deterioration caused by the construction of new residences, the town seemed nervous about accepting another housing project. This, combined with dire financial problems faced by Capizzi after the October 1987 Stock Market crash and subsequent bottoming out of the real estate market, effectively halted further progress in redeveloping the Photech site.

Figures 9 (left) and 10 (right): *Photographs of the interior of the renovated Berkshire Mill. The first floor (left) is designated for commercial space, and the above three floors are luxury apartments (right). Both photos show the center atrium in the mill.*

After the Photech buildings were abandoned by the Photech Corporation in 1989, a period of indecision that continues to today began over what to do with the site. In the early 90's, in spite of acknowledgment by town officials that minor leakage existed in the roof of building 1, it was essentially left uncared for and exposed to natural weathering and deterioration.[43] In 1995, the leakage grew too serious to ignore, and although the town did not yet own the property it considered options for repairing the roof. None were implemented, and the building's wooden structural support soon became infested with mold and rot (figures 11 and 12). Despite this, a few developers did express interest in the site toward the late 90's. Those interested included partners Peter Lafayette of the Berkshire Housing Development and Bob Kuehn of Keen Development in Cambridge, local banks and investors, the Williamstown Chamber of Commerce, and even Williams College.[44] Of these, Lafayette and Kuehn were the most realistic candidates. Their initial plan was to convert the entire building into 70 to 80 mixed income apartments with a ratio of about 3:1 market rate vs. affordable. As Lafayette noted, "we viewed the site as extremely appealing because of its location on a river, the historic design of the building, open space, and plenty of room for parking."[45] But in October of 2000, after a thorough inspection of the building was completed by a private firm of consulting engineers, a follow-up report stated "deterioration of the of the roof and floor framing was so significant that there is very little that could be reused if the building were to be rehabilitated, except for possibly the exterior perimeter brick walls."[46] This news, coupled with an unknown removal cost of asbestos and lead in the

[43] *Ibid*, p. 72
[44] *Ibid*, p. 84
[45] E-mail conversation with Peter Lafayette, 11/5/03
[46] Crowley-Delman, p. 84

walls of the building discouraged any real further interest in redevelopment on the Photech site.



Figures 11 (left) and 12 (right): *Photographs of wooden floors in building 1 showing extent of mold infestation and rot due to roof leakage. This leakage was a direct factor in the building's roof collapse in 2003.*

Lafayette and Kuehn went on as partners in mill redevelopment in Williamstown soon after turning away from Photech. Just recently, they purchased the General Cable Co. mill on Water Street, and plan to establish 60 residential units in addition to commercial space. Meanwhile, despite the town foreclosing on and becoming owners of the property, the Photech mill was left to deteriorate and in June 2003 its main roof collapsed. With an EPA grant of approximately $1,000,000 currently pending for total demolition of building 1, it seems the fate of that building is sealed. Indeed, the property may finally look more attractive and feasible to developers once the site is cleared and "shovel ready."

8. Regulations

In designing a redevelopment scheme for the Photech site, potential developers must consider the various regulations that apply. Broadly, four main categories of regulations are important to development on site: 1) Zoning, 2) Zoning Overlays, 3) the Massachusetts Wetlands and Rivers Protection Act, and 4) the Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit.

1) Zoning:

Figure 13: *Map showing current zoning of the Photech site.*

Currently, the majority of the Photech site is zoned Limited Industrial (Figure 13). In regards to allowable uses, the Limited Industrial zone carries stringent limitations on commercial, residential and recreational uses. Accordingly, most redevelopment options for the Photech site will likely involve rezoning. For further discussion on rezoning the site, see section 12.

2) Zoning Overlay Districts: Confined Aquifer and Wellhead 2

Figure 14: *Map showing extent of overlay aquifer protection zones. Confined aquifer protection zone is in pink, unconfined is in green*

As shown by the zoning overlay map in figure 14, the Photech site is located in the Confined Aquifer Protection Zone. In addition, the entire site also sits in the Wellhead Protection District. The purpose of these overlay districts is to help preserve the quality and quantity of water resources in Williamstown. As with any zoned district, there are limits to allowable uses in each overlay district, and even if a 40B were obtained for the site, it would not exempt development from the requirements of the overlying zones.

The requirements of the Confined Aquifer District pertain mostly to potential drilling into the underlying confined aquifer. As stated in the Williamstown Zoning Bylaws, all excavations, wells, borings or intrusions into the aquifer are allowed only by special permit from

the town Planning Board.[47] There are other regulations concerning the confined aquifer as well, but since it is unlikely that development on the Photech site would involve drilling into it they would hold little bearing to developers. Of more significance are the requirements posed by the Wellhead Protection District. Of the relevant limits on allowable uses within the Wellhead District are what materials can be stored on site. For example, the storage of hazardous materials or commercial fertilizers, unless within an above ground container or building where they can be safely contained, is not allowed.[48] This implies that certain commercial or industrial uses for the site, such as a landscaping company or manufacturing plant, may not be allowed. Further, the application of pesticides (including herbicides) and fertilizers within the district is only allowed by a special permit from the Zoning Board. [49] While not prohibitive, this could still have regulatory implications for maintaining a park or other recreational area, where these practices are common. Arguably of most relevance to development on the Photech site is the allowable area that can be impervious. According to the Bylaws, "any use that will render impervious more than 15% or 2,500 square feet of any lot, whichever is greater," is only allowed by special permit.[50] Considering that any development at Photech will likely involve a considerable amount of parking space, developers would want to be sure that either a special permit could be obtained or some other waiver from this regulation, which could stem from rezoning.

[47] Williamstown Zoning Bylaws, chapter 7 section 4, p. 7065
[48] *ibid, p. 7072*
[49] *ibid, p. 7072-73*
[50] *ibid, p. 7073*

3) Massachusetts Wetlands and Rivers Protection Acts (1972, 1996):

Figure 15: *Map showing extent of 100 and 500 yr. flood plains on the Photech site*

Figure 15 shows that a significant portion of the Photech site lies within the 100 year flood plain, most notably at the north-east and south-east corners. Further, an even greater portion of the site lies within the 100' buffer zone from the Hoosic River, and contains the inner and outer riparian zones. Normally, this would render any development on the site subject to regulatory guidelines of the Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act (RPA). However, since the Photech site was designated on the National Register as a Historic Mill Complex in 1983, the site is exempted from the RPA. But the 100 year flood plain and 100' buffer zones are resource areas protected by the Wetlands Protection Act as well. And being a Historic Mill Complex does not exempt Photech from meeting the guidelines of the WPA. Thus, any development that took place within those resource areas would require either a Request for Determination of

Applicability or a Notice of Intent from the local Conservation Commission. It is likely that the type of development allowed in these resource areas (mainly toward the southern end of the site where no buildings have previously been constructed) would be regulated so that the amount of additional impervious surface area is little to none.

4) Chapter 40B:

Chapter 40B (Massachusetts Comprehensive Permit Law) is a state statute that was enacted in 1969 in order to address the shortage of affordable housing in communities across Massachusetts. This statute allows local Zoning Boards of Appeals (ZBA) to streamline the housing development process with greater flexibility in the zoning bylaws if at least 20-25% of the housing units proposed have long-term affordability restrictions.[51] Since 1970, Chapter 40B has helped build church-sponsored housing for the elderly, single-family subdivisions, multifamily rental housing developments, and mixed income condominium projects throughout Massachusetts. More than 485 developments in over 200 communities, totaling approximately 18,000 affordable units out of about 30,000 new units in all, have been built through Chapter 40B with very little assistance through local, state, or federal funds.[52] Williamstown has one 40B housing development at Meadowvale, off North Hoosac Road.

There are several necessary requirements that must be met for projects to apply for Chapter 40B. The project first needs to be approved under a state or federal housing program. This process would include obtaining a Determination of Project Eligibility (Site Approval letter) under one of the participating state subsidy programs. MassHousing, MassDevelopment, US

[51] 20% is used if the affordable units meet the 50% area median income threshold. 25% is used if the affordable units meet the 80% area income threshold.
[52] "Fact Sheet on Chapter 40B," Citizens' Housing and Planning Association, <http://www.chapa.org/40b_fact.html>.

Housing and Urban Development (HUD), US Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and New England Fund member banks all have 40B programs. In order to be eligible for one of these 40B programs, the project must have at least 25% of the units be restricted to households at or below 80% of the area median income, for at least 30 years. The other option would be to have 20% of the units be restricted to households below 50% of the area median income.[53] The median income for the Williamstown area is $51,875, which would make the 80% eligible income $41,500 and 50% eligible income $25,937.50.[54] The only developing entities allowed to apply for 40B are public agencies, a nonprofit organization, or a limited dividend organization. The developers must also agree to limit profit to a maximum of 20% of ownership developments and 10% per year for rental developments.

Once these requirements are met, an application is submitted to the local ZBA, which then notifies all the appropriate boards and commissions for recommendations. The application should include at least the site approval letter, preliminary plans, utilities plan, and requested exemptions. It should identify features of the site area, proposed structures, as well as project impacts. Chapter 40B does not exempt developments from meeting state regulations, such as the Rivers and Wetlands Protection Act, Title 5 (the septic system regulations), and all applicable building codes. The Station Mill specifically however is exempt from meeting the Rivers Protection Act as a Historical Mill Complex, and also will not have to consider Title 5 regulations as the site is fully connected to existing sewer lines.[55]

The zoning board will then begin a public hearing within thirty days, and upon its conclusion will issue a decision within forty days. The ZBA may approve the submitted

[53] "Fact Sheet on Chapter 40B The State's Affordable Housing Zoning Law," Citizens' Housing and Planning Association, (March 2003), <http://www.mhp.net/termsheets/40BQA.pdf>.
[54] "Williamstown, MA Housing Feasibility Assessment: An Assessment of the Development Potential of the Lowry Property," Development Cycles, (March 2003), 5.
[55] "Fact Sheet on Chapter 40B The State's Affordable Housing Zoning Law".

application, approve the project with stipulations provided they do not render the project economically unfeasible, or deny the application altogether. The right to appeal the ZBA's decision to the Housing Appeals Committee is retained only for proposals in communities with less than 10% year-round subsidized housing, or where affordable housing exists on sites that equal less than 1.5% of the total land area zoned for residential, commercial or industrial use.[56] Since only 4.4% of Williamstown's housing stock is affordable, it has yet to reach Massachusetts' goal of 10% affordable housing. Therefore, any 40B proposal for Williamstown would be eligible to be appealed.[57]

9. Potential Sources of Funding:

Identifying funding sources for redevelopment of the site has increased in urgency and importance given the uncertain status of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funds for the partially collapsed Photech Mill demolition and cleanup in fiscal year 2004. Michael Barry, the EPA coordinator for New England, and Michael Gorski, the director of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Western Massachusetts region, have both endorsed cleanup of the Photech site.[58] Furthermore, Mr. Barry confirmed that "since the Mill building has collapsed this site does rank relatively high." However, he clarified that "the formal documentation that includes the funding authorization can't be submitted by me until EPA actually has the funds to spend," which he was hopeful would happen by February.[59] When the funding request is finally submitted, the likely estimate will be $1 million. Although many have expressed concern that the costs could be higher with the collapse of the side facing the river, including significant

[56] "Fact Sheet on Chapter 40B The State's Affordable Housing Zoning Law".
[57] Bob Buckwalter, "Williamstown Affordable Housing Task Force Report," Williamstown Housing Task Force, (21 August 2003).
[58] Susan Bush, "Funds for Photech Cleanup Lacking," *Berkshire Eagle*, (19 November 2003).
[59] Michael Barry, Email correspondence (5 December 2003).

negative environmental impacts, after heavy snowfall this winter, Mr. Barry speculated that costs might even be lower if the other side of the building collapsed. If large chunks of debris were to fall into the river, the EPA would take those materials out as part of the removal of the asbestos-contaminated portion of the building. However, in terms of posing an environmental or human health risk, because asbestos is primarily a threat through inhalation, the EPA is not quite as concerned about the risks from debris falling into the river as much as if asbestos continues to escape into the air from the collapsed portion of the building.[60]

If the EPA decides to allocate money for the Photech site, it seems likely that the funding will come through sometime next year. However, if the Photech site is not chosen to be remediated by EPA next year, there are a variety of funding programs that grant or loan substantial amounts towards demolition and asbestos abatement. According to Sean Calnan at MassDevelopment, a major state agency that lends money for affordable housing, there are four current funds that Photech can apply for, which are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: *Funding for building demolition and asbestos abatement*[61]

Funds and Their Sources	**Max. Grant or Loan**
Brownfields Economic Development Initiative (BEDI) • US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	$2 million
Section 108 Loan Program • HUD	$0.5 million-$5 million
Community Development Action Grant (CDAG) • Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)	$1 million
Revolving Loan Fund • MassDevelopment	$0.5 million-$2 million

In order to apply for BEDI funding, the developer must also have a Section 108 Loan, so the grant would occur only with the loan program. Mr. Calnan also added that many funds,

[60] Michael Barry, Phone correspondence (8 December 2003).
[61] Table compiled from information from Sean Calnan, Phone correspondence (8 December 2003).

including those at MassDevelopment, "require an end-user in place."[62] This would mean that if Williamstown were to apply for the funding, rather than a developer with specific plans already, then Williamstown would have to demonstrate that there is a developer willing and waiting to move forward with the site as soon as the demolition and asbestos removal is complete.

Once the site is clean, any developer will need to investigate a variety of funding programs to finance the project. Fortunately, there are many programs that are geared towards encouraging affordable housing and economic revitalization projects. These programs are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: *Affordable housing & economic revitalization funding programs*[63]

Funding and Their Sources	**Max. Grant or Loan**
Housing Development Support Program • DHCD	$400,000
MA Community Capital Fund • DHCD	$100,000-$500,000
Community Development Action Grant (CDAG) • DHCD	$1,000,000
Community Enterprise Economic Development Program • HUD	$60,000
OneSource and OneStop • Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation (MHIC)	$250,000-$10,000,000
Permanent Rental Financing Program (PRFP) • Massachusetts Housing Partnership Fund (MHP)	$250,000-$9,000,000
Permanent Plus Program (PERM PLUS) • MHP	$2,000,000
Small Scale Rental Production (SSRP) • MHP	$90,000 (per unit)
MA Tax-Exempt Credit for Housing (SSRP) • MHP	$3,000,000-$10,000,000

These programs encompass a wide range of financing options through loans or grants, for rentals or homeownership, and are eligible to different entities, such as municipalities, private developers, or non-profit organizations.

[62] Sean Calnan.
[63] Compiled from "Williamstown MA Housing Feasibility Assessment" and online research.

Community Preservation Fund:

A local, community-based funding program that could be tapped into in the future is the Community Preservation Act. This fund was created following the Community Preservation Act (CPA), which was enacted in 2000 as a funding tool for communities to address local needs. It allows municipalities to create a local Community Preservation Fund intended to create and preserve affordable housing, open space, and historic sites. At least 10% of the annual revenues from the fund must be used to address each of the three aforementioned core concerns. The state has created a matching program through a trust fund generated through fees at the Registry of Deeds and Land Court, estimated to collect a minimum of $25 million per year[64].

In Williamstown, the CPA fund was passed in May 14, 2002. It raises money through a surcharge of 2.0% on the real property tax with an exemption for the first $100,000 of taxable value of residential real estate. In 2003, Williamstown received a 100% state matching grant of $118,946[65]. Williamstown CPA has $237,892 in total revenues from 2003. The Station Mill redevelopment would be an exemplary use of CPA funds in meeting the central goal of building and preserving a sense of community in Williamstown.

10. Community Survey

As part of designing an appropriate redevelopment scheme for the Photech site, we feel community involvement and feedback is crucial. This is especially true considering the historic significance of the Station Mill to the surrounding Cole Ave. neighborhood. In order to help assess community preferences in redeveloping Photech, we distributed 200 surveys to residents in the Station Mill District and placed survey drop-boxes in the Williamstown public library,

[64] "Community Preservation Act," Massachusetts Government, <http://commpres.env.state.ma.us/content/cpa.asp#>.
[65] "Status of Local Votes & State Matching Funds," The Trust for Public Land, <http://www.tpl.org/tier3_cdl.cfm?content_item_id=3340&folder_id=1045>.

Banknorth on Spring St., and Cold Springs Coffee Roasters on Spring Street. The survey questions were designed to help determine the community's priorities regarding redeveloping the Photech site, as well as their preferences regarding residential, commercial and recreational uses. These results are discussed in the following sections of this report. The full survey and its results can be seen in the appendix.

Of the 200 surveys distributed to the Station Mill District, 81 were returned, giving a response rate of just over 40%. 40 surveys were filled out and dropped in the boxes placed around town. The high response rate from the Mill District suggests community members there have an appreciable interest in the potential redevelopment of Photech. In light of this interest, it is important that any development begins with soliciting feedback from the community so that their desires may be incorporated in the design.

11. Potential Uses in Development

The next three sections of this report provide background and reasoning for our actual redevelopment scheme for Photech. They deal with the three major uses we recommend for redevelopment: Residential units, commercial space and recreation. Figure 16 below shows survey results for how these uses ranked in terms of priority for redeveloping Photech. While it is important to note that recreation was viewed as the number one priority in redevelopment, it is also important that other uses were desired as well. This supports an overall mixed-use strategy for redevelopment.

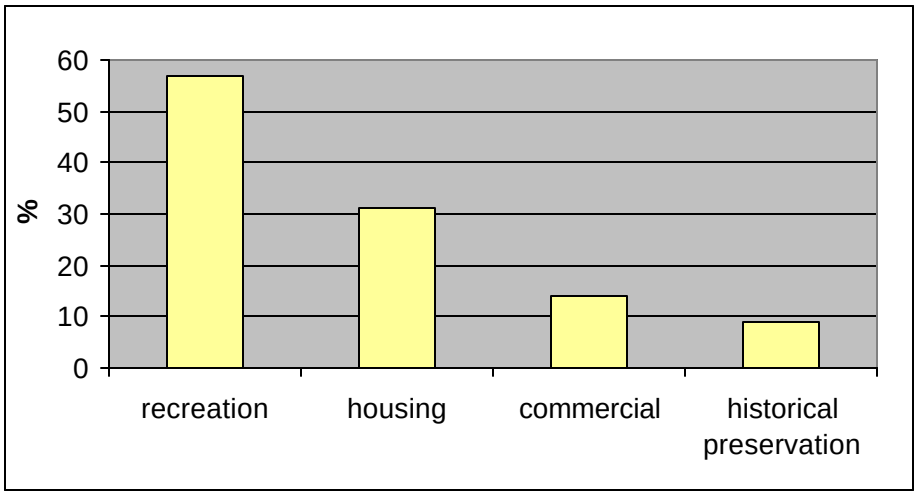


Figure 16: *Graph showing priorities for redevelopment at Photech according to survey results. Recreation was seen as the number one priority by 53% of respondents, housing by 28%, commercial space by 12% and historical preservation by under 10% of respondents.*

Why Commercial Space at Photech?

Community survey respondents did not consider commercial use the primary type of development that should occur on the site, however, many did support commercial use as the second or third priority. As Figure 17 shows, only about 12% supported commercial as the first priority use on the site. However, more than 25% of respondents wanted to see commercial as their second or third priority use on the site.

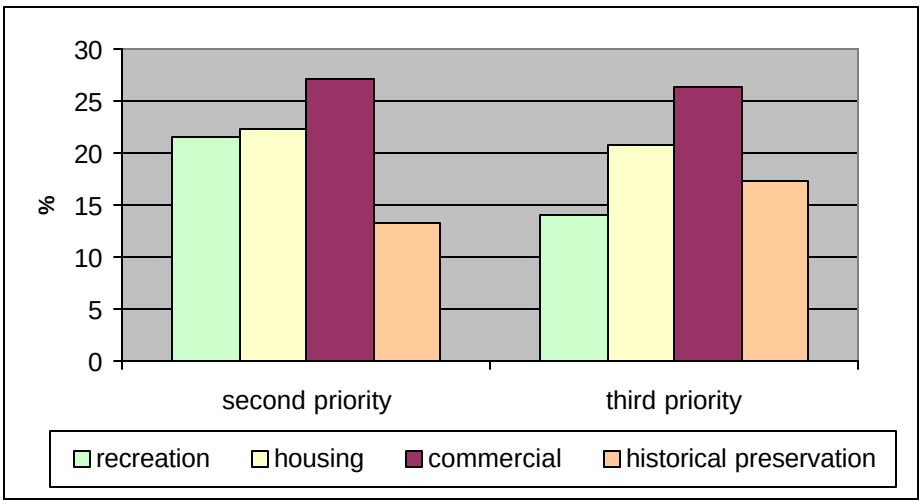


Figure 17: *Graph showing percentage of respondents that ranked commercial use as their second or third priority for redevelopment.*

The types of commercial use that respondents preferred varied greatly. As Figure shows, nearly 60% supported a grocery/general store or a restaurant on the site, while just over 30% supported offices or a clothing store. At nearly 50%, some type of art space generated slightly more supporters than non-supporters. Looking at the responses of those who specifically expressed that they would not want a particular commercial use on the site shows that just over half the respondents do not want to see offices or a clothing store (figure 18).

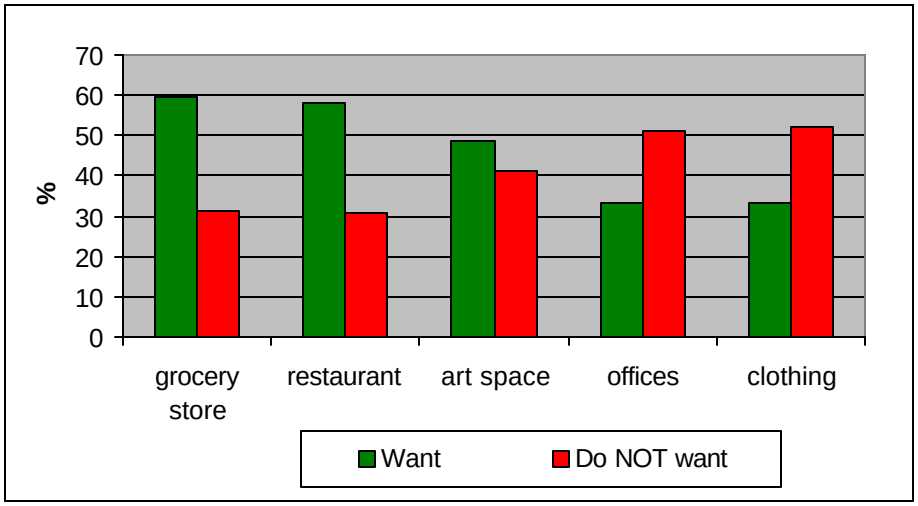


Figure 18: *Graph showing preferences for specific commercial uses.*

Some of the other types of commercial businesses that were suggested by respondents were: light manufacturing, car wash, specialty retail, cinema complex, gas station, bank, and a daycare center.

As part of an infill development and mixed-use strategy, the Master Plan encourages "mixed housing/commercial uses" on "the Carol Cable and Photech mill sites."[66] However, any commercial use on the site should be planned carefully to address specific needs of Williamstown and this area in particular. The Master Plan study revealed that jobs, offered by town employers and private business, have been growing faster than the resident labor force in

[66] "Master Plan," 12-3.

the past decade.[67] There may not be a tremendous need to create jobs on this site for the sake of creating additional employment opportunities.

What does need to happen, however, is the creation of jobs that are more varied than the already existing ones: "While job levels have been stable because of large institutional employers like Williams College, and unemployment has been below that of surrounding communities, new jobs tend to be either relatively high- or low-paying, fostering a sharp income disparity in the community. This disparity can be addressed by creating more diverse employment opportunities."[68] Providing those opportunities are integral in order to halt and reverse the current expansion in the disparity between low- and high-income households, a gap that is more pronounced in Williamstown than in any other Massachusetts municipality. 2000 Census figures revealed an 18% increase in the income gap between 1990 and 2000 for Williamstown. The income gap increased by 6.5% in Massachusetts and 7.3% in Berkshire County.[69] However, not only should the salaries be more diverse, but the type of jobs should also be varied: "For Williamstown residents who are not employed by Williams College, the lack of regional job growth limits economic opportunities, particularly for primary wage earners with professional skills."[70]

Because the Photech site is within the Wellhead Protection District 2, certain industrial uses are prohibited, such as the storage of hazardous materials, unless contained well. Industrial and manufacturing activities should be limited on the site, not only because such materials could potentially seep into Williamstown's groundwater, but also because they could pose a threat to the Hoosic River and the site's recreational potential.

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[67] "Master Plan," 10.
[68] "Master Plan," 12.
[69] Adam Gorlick, "Gap between rich and poor grows most in Williamstown," *South Coast Today* (27 August 2002), <http://www.southcoasttoday.com/daily/08-02/08-27-02/a03sr018.htm> visited 5 February 2004.
[70] "Master Plan," 9.

The potential for economic growth on the Photech site should be carefully considered in order to create opportunities that are compatible with the other two uses that have been more definitively recommended for the site – recreation and housing. The Photech site should incorporate some type of commercial activity as part of the infill development strategy by meeting the need for economic growth in already developed areas rather than expanding out along Route 2. However, certain businesses will be more or less successful on this site in meeting the community goals of this area, which should also be considered.

Why Residential Units for the Photech Site?

In 2002, Williamstown's Master Plan Steering Committee commissioned a housing needs assessment study from RKG Associates of Durham, NH. The study found a pressing housing demand in Williamstown for low to moderate income families. The combination of a declining number of houses being built every decade since the 1970's, the increasing attractiveness to retirees and second home owners and a steady rise in residential property values has made it difficult to find affordable, starter or rental housing in Williamstown.[71] To be considered 'affordable', households must spend no more than 30% of their gross income on housing costs. Latest estimates by RKG reveal that of low to moderate income families living in Williamstown (State's definition based on area wide median income), roughly 40% are paying more than 30% of their monthly income on housing costs.[72] Further, to meet Massachusetts' Chapter 40B requirements, towns must have 10% or more of their total residential units designated as affordable. Currently, Williamstown has 4.5%.[73] Consequently, RKG estimated an immediate

[71] *Williamstown Master Plan: Final Report and Recommendations of the Master Plan Steering Committee*. Williamstown, MA. 2002.
[72] *Ibid*, p. 20.
[73] Ryan, John J. *An Assessment of the Development Potential of the Lowry Property*. Williamstown, MA. 2003. p. 13.

local demand for roughly 65 affordable ownership units for low, moderate and middle income renters.[74] In light of this, the Master Plan recommends Williamstown expands the availability of affordable housing for "first-time home buyers, young families, moderate income families, single people, people with handicaps, retirees and the elderly" in the amount of 100 units over the next ten years.[75] And specifically, it suggests the "Photech Mill site be evaluated as a possible location for affordable/assisted rental housing as a component or a larger mixed-use redevelopment strategy."[76] In the construction of new housing in Williamstown, the Master Plan Steering Committee also envisions the efficient use of public services such as sewer and water, the preservation of historic structures and mixed-use redevelopment. Each of these can be accomplished at the Photech site, making it a superb location for residential units in Williamstown.

In general, our survey results agreed with the Master Plan and pointed toward housing as a major priority for redeveloping Photech. When asked to rank possible development options on site, housing was picked as the number one priority by 28% of respondents. Housing was second only to recreation, which had 51% of the votes. Many respondents also suggested that 'affordable' housing be incorporated into residential development. Of the types of housing people would actually want to see, figure 19 below shows that apartments and lofts were favored strongly over single family homes and duplexes. Further, 63% of survey respondents preferred a mix of rental and owner-occupied units on site. This suggests the most desirable development of residential units at Photech may be a combination of apartments and condominiums.

[74] *Williamstown Master Plan*, p. 21.
[75] *Ibid*, p. 18.
[76] *Ibid*, p. 22.

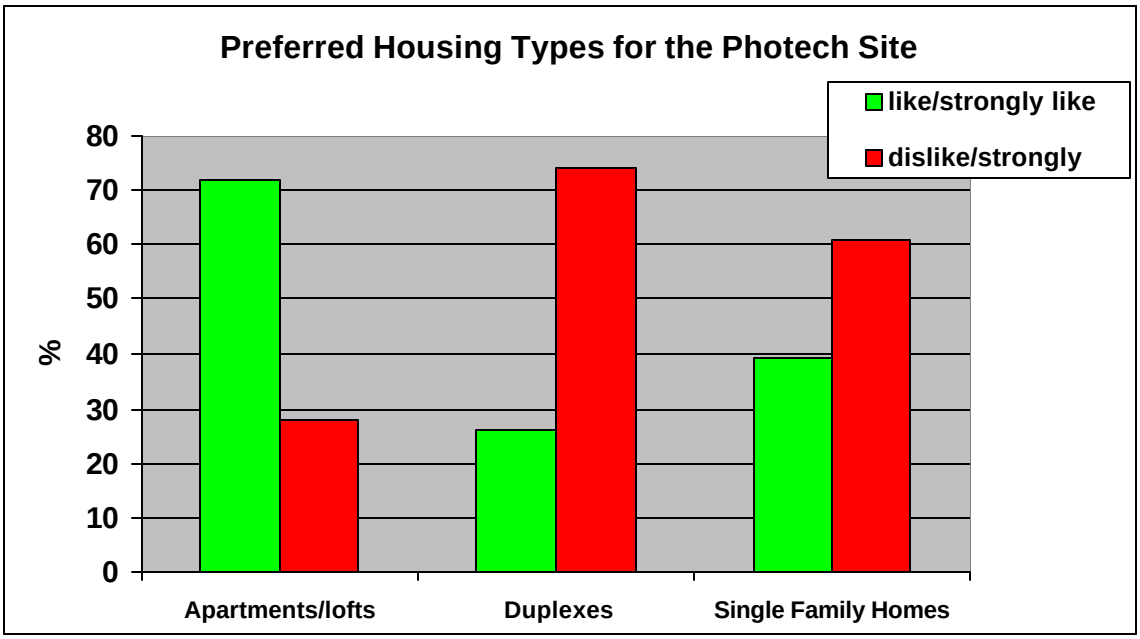


Figure 19: *Survey results for preferred housing types for the Photech Site. Apartments/lofts are strongly favored over duplexes and single family homes.*

The potential for developing residential units at the Photech site has tremendous implications for meeting Williamstown's overall housing needs. In addition, housing ranks high on the list of priorities by the community in redeveloping the site. It is our recommendation that residential units be incorporated in the overall redevelopment scheme.

Why Recreation at the Photech Site?

A community center requires more than just living space and shops, but a place to gather outdoors as well. The location of the station mill site both as the hub of a neighborhood and a large property along the Hoosic River makes it an ideal location for a family park, a bike trail corridor, and boat access to the river.

While there may be many recommendations for use of the open space on the station mill site, it is important to remember that they all do not have to be developed, and certainly don't

have to be developed at the same time. While constructing a building is an all or nothing enterprise, construction of recreation facilities can add to one another over time.

While little direct or immediate profit might come from using part of the station mill lot for recreational space, there are countless other benefits that will lead to both general improvements of life in the town, as well as indirect benefits and profits for developments on the site. The community overwhelmingly supports some recreational development on the station mill site. In fact, in our community survey, recreational use was the most popular choice of potential development options. 53% of respondents chose recreational development as their first chose of development options, and 77% chose it as one of their top two choices.[77]

Not only is there community support for recreational development of the station mill site, but there is strong support in the master plan as well. Although there is no legal requirement to follow the town master plan, it should serve as a guide to steer development in Williamstown in a direction that will ensure the continued prosperity and livability of the town. Repeatedly in the master plan are statements that support the construction of a park with river access as part of a larger development on the station mill site. According to the master plan, "Existing public open spaces in town... do not invite gathering and lingering, and are hard to travel to by foot or bike." [78] A park in the middle of town with some benches and a bike path going through it would fill a niche for outdoor public space that is a perceived need by the town planners. Furthermore, the master plan goes as far as to specify that these facilities are needed where there are the most people. "Recreation programs and facilities [should] be expanded within or close to the town center."[79] Certainly, the station mill site is near the town center. With a documented need for recreational development, and a site well-suited to it in the middle of town, there should be little

[77] Envi 302 community survey. See appendix for results.
[78] Williamstown Master Plan p. 14
[79] *Ibid*. p. 17

preventing utilization of at least part of the space for recreation. Not only does the master plan talk about the need for a park, but it mentions the importance of access to the Hoosic and Green Rivers as well. The Master plan points out that "Williamstown has abundant recreation potential, *particularly with two rivers running through town.* Although improvements have been made, both general and handicapped access to existing recreation facilities and in-town natural areas (including rivers) is inadequate."[80] When such an excellent opportunity to fulfill both the wishes of the local community and the master plan exists, there is little reason to neglect recreational development on the station mill site.

Williamstown zoning law limits impermeable surface area to a maximum of 15% in a wellhead protection zone.[81] While this bylaw can be waved in conjunction with a 40b permit and for the redevelopment of an old mill site, we recommend obeying the intent of the law if not the letter. While open space requirements can easily be met through small grassy areas in the middle of a parking lot or a narrow strip of grass surrounding the outside of a site, we recommend concentrating the open space in one place on the site. A neighborhood park can serve as a gathering point for people from all of the nearby homes. Within three blocks of the Station Mill are over 200 homes, many of which are occupied by families with children. Building a park near their homes will allow them to walk to a park where in the past they would have to drive. A local park would greatly enhance the quality of life in the neighborhoods which border it.

With buildings, parking, and pavement, there really remains only about two acres on the site that would remain for significant recreational development. The back of the site, on the southeast corner of the property, already has a large number of trees growing naturally along the bend in the river. These should not be sacrificed to build a park. Rather, the park should be built

[80] *Ibid.* p 14, Emphasis added.
[81] Williamstown Zoning Bylaws section 70-7.4

on the already flattened lot that takes up most of the back of the site. Recent waste removal has left the lot not only free of toxins, but also flat, with a surface largely made up of gravel. This area could easily be covered in a layer of topsoil and seeded to create a grass park for the residents of the new development and surrounding neighborhood. With concentrated residences in the new building, there will be a need for nearby open space to serve as a common yard for the apartment dwellers. Creating a small park would almost certainly raise the value of any apartments built on the site, as it would create an outdoor amenity that is not available at many apartment developments.

Building a park, of course, would have costs. But the benefit it would bring in increased desirability for the apartments would almost certainly quickly offset the building expenses. Without a definite site plan or building schedule, it is difficult to accurately predict how much developing recreational space on the site would cost. The park could range from just a basic grass field, to a more urban-style common area with tables, chairs, benches, and even a small area for performances. The table below summarizes the basic costs for developing different elements of the park.

Table 3: *Approximate park construction costs.*

ITEM	COST	NUMBER	TOTAL
Topsoil and Grass[82]	$12,000.00	1	$12,000.00
Shrubs	$60.00	20	$1,200.00
Trees	$350.00	10	$2,500.00
8' Picnic Table[83]	$530.00	2	$1,060.00
24 gallon trash receptacle	$510.00	3	$1,530.00
8' park bench	$310.00	4	$1,240.00
Childrens toy (e.g. Swingset)	$900.00	1	$900.00
Performance Area[84]	$7,300.00	1	$7,300.00
TOTAL			**$27,730.00**

Obviously, all choices of what would be put on the site would be in the hands of the developer. With the elementary school so nearby, and with a focus on starter housing over family homes, we recommend developing the space in a more adult oriented-fashion. A single piece of playground equipment for children, such as a swing set, would make the site desirable for families, without putting too much emphasis on a playground, keeping it friendly for adults. With ample green space, any group of children or teenagers would easily be able to make use of the recreation space. For the residents of the apartments, some benches and tables would make the space easily accessible for enjoying the outdoors during the nicer months of the year. It would also serve to make the apartments more pet-friendly, if a developer so chose. To add a unique element to the park, we would suggest that a small outdoor performance area be built on

[82] Prices for landscaping come from an estimate from Countryside Landscaping, in an email conversation with Pete Endres during the first week of December. Other landscaping estimates were obtained as well. Different companies estimates varied immensely, making it apparent that landscaping costs are difficult to determine without a definite plan and schedule of development. Their estimates, of course, are extremely preliminary. Where they gave a range of prices, I took the middle to upper side of the range, and added in their installation fee as well.

[83] Park bench, trash can, and picnic table prices vary by the company from which you purchase them. The choices of exact style and size are somewhat arbitrary. I tried to choose an item that was both in the middle in size and price to give the best approximate estimation of what the costs involved in park development will be. These prices are from American Park and Recreation Company's website. Quoted on Dec 5, 2003. www.apark.com.

[84] This is the price for a 20' gazebo at www.backyardamerica.com. A gazebo is not the only option for a performance, nor does one even need to be built. This is just an estimate of what the cost may be if the a developer chose to put a performance are on the site.

the site. It would not have to be large, but could serve as a place to hold small evening concerts in the summer. With the theatre festival and Tanglewood crowds in the summer, it may be a way to bring tourists to the park in the summer months. It would also allow for the residents of the apartment and neighborhood to have an outdoor hard surface that could be used for anything from an afternoon in the sun to a wedding reception.

Zoning regulations permit the construction of a park in any zone in Williamstown.[85] Approval from the zoning board of appeals would be necessary, but there should not be a strong reason why a park would not be wanted on the site. After all, any use is preferable to hazardous waste storage. Additionally, any development in the 100 year flood plain is subject to restrictions from the conservation commission.[86] An RDA (request for determination of applicability) would need to be filed with the conservation commission. Construction in the park on the 100 year flood plain would have to be limited, but it would not rule out a swingset, benches, or other minor installations that would not displace very much water in the event of a flood event. For the sake of investment, it would not be wise to put anything too fragile or valuable on land that is prone to occasional flooding.

Additionally, any outdoor recreation development would certainly want to capitalize on the site's location next to the largest river in the area. Rivers in America are a limited resource. For most of the 19th and 20th centuries, rivers acted mostly as natural sewers. The passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972 has caused vast improvements in America's rivers. No longer do rivers catch on fire from industrial pollution. While the Hoosic remained non-flammable for all of its history, it nonetheless suffered from severe pollution from factories and sewage treatment along its banks. Although much work remains to be done, in recent years it has earned designation as

[85] Williamstown Code Section 70-3.3
[86] Conversation with Hank Art 12/3/03

class B, which qualifies it as safe for recreational activities like boating, swimming, and fishing.[87] The recent master plan designers must have noted the improvements in water quality in the Hoosic when they said that "A plan [should] be developed to provide access to and maintenance of town rivers."[88] Certainly, there is strong support and perceived need for developments that lead people to use and appreciate the river that flows through Williamstown.

Already along the Hoosic, beginning in North Adams and continuing into New York, are a series of canoe launches. In the warmer spring, summer, and fall months, many people take their boats to the Hoosic to enjoy a paddle through Williamstown and southern Vermont. Most of the available canoe launches, however, are little more than dirt paths down to the river with a nearby place to park.[89] While canoe launches with little development serve both a functional purpose and fulfill a necessary aesthetic niche, there is room for a more developed launch. In fact, it would even be possible to make a canoe launch on the station mill site handicapped accessible. A launch in the middle of town would need to be more than just a dirt ramp. Compared to the cost and effort of developing a new building on the site, however, the cost of a canoe launch should be negligible, while the benefit would be enormous.

The topography of the site lends itself to building an easily accessed canoe launch. While the riverbank along the side of the building, and even beyond, is quite steep, the incline down to the river at the southeast end (back) of the site becomes significantly more flat. Any developer building apartments and stores would almost certainly want to concentrate the buildings towards the front of the site, leaving the back of the site for a park. A path across the park to bring canoes

[87] From "Hudson River Basin 1997 Water Quality Assessment Report." 2000. Report # 11/12/13-AC-1. Prepared by: Laurie R. Kennedy and Mollie J. Weinstein. In "Monitoring the Hoosic: North Branch and Main Stem in 2001" Report dated 11/28/01 prepared by Dick Schlesinger. Online at www.hoorwa.org
[88] Williamstown Master Plan, p. 17
[89] Interview with Lauren Stevens 10/31/03

down to the river at the back of the site could easily be built, creating a unique element that would add value to any development on the site, as well as provide a valuable service to the town.

The cost for developing a canoe launch can vary considerably depending on the choices made by the developer. The semi-urban nature of the site lends itself to a higher degree of development than other canoe launches in the area. Making the site handicapped accessible would fit in with a more developed concrete ramp and boat launch. The costs that can be involved in the construction of a canoe launch are detailed below. These figures are from a highly developed launch built in the Blackwell Forest Preserve in Illinois, but all the costs translate to a similar development along the Hoosic in Williamstown.[90]

Table 4: *Canoe launch construction costs.*

ITEM	QUANTITY	UNIT	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL PRICE
Erosion Control Fence	30	lin. ft.	$3.00	$90.00
Earth Excavation	215	cu. yd.	$10.00	$2,150.00
Aggregate Base Course 8"	215	cu. yd.	$25.00	$5,375.00
Furnish & Place Topsoil 6"	135	sq. yd.	$2.00	$270.00
Seeding Class 1	0.03	acre	$4,000.00	$120.00
Mulch Method	0.06	ton	$1,000.00	$60.00
Cable Gate	1	ea.	$1,000.00	$1,000.00
Sign - Entrance	1	ea.	$3,000.00	$3,000.00
Sign - General Info.	1	ea.	$500.00	$500.00
Sign - Preserve Regulations	1	ea.	$200.00	$200.00
Sign - No Dumping/Fine	1	ea.	$200.00	$200.00
Sign - No Recycle	1	ea.	$150.00	$150.00
Sign - Take Out	1	ea.	$50.00	$50.00
Sign - Stop	1	ea.	$90.00	$90.00
Wheel Stops	3	ea.	$40.00	$120.00
Refuse Can	1	ea.	$100.00	$100.00
Recycle Can	1	ea.	$100.00	$100.00
TOTAL				**$ 13,575.00**

The costs for developing a canoe launch vary immensely depending on the decisions made by the designer. A launch could be built for much less money. It would depend on what

[90] Sample spreadsheet from the Illinois Open Lands project, www.openlands.org

exists on the site and how the launch would fit in with that development. Some of the canoe launch construction costs could be offset if done with other earth moving, seeding, and building on the site in conjunction with park or building construction. There is the possibility of using Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation funds for such a project. Their ability to fund large new projects has been decreasing in recent years. Although not out of the question, they should not be relied on as a source of funds. The costs of the launch, however, would almost certainly be offset by the increased value of the real estate, and especially by the increased commercial use that would be brought to shops on the site by people coming there to canoe.

Beyond the zoning and conservation commission permits that are required for a park, there would be additional permits necessary for a canoe launch. According to the Massachusetts wetlands and river protection acts, modification of riverbanks requires determination that the proposed activity will not hurt the interests (such as flood control and wildlife protection) that the legislation serves to protect.[91] A canoe launch would be a very minor modification of the riverbank that would allow for a greater appreciation of nature. Approval is not guaranteed, but a canoe launch is more likely to pass the conservation commission than building a new road in a flood plain

While canoe launches in one form or another have been a part of New England even before any European settlers reached its shores, the river near the station mill has the potential to be developed for the newer sport of whitewater kayaking. Recently, especially in western states, there has been a trend towards creating whitewater features on sections of rivers that run through the middle of a town. With the growing popularity of kayaking and huge leaps in the technology of boat-building, a branch of the sport has grown known as "park and play." While traditionally, kayakers have gone high in the mountains to find fast running rivers, recently, people have been

[91] Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act, section 10.58

spending more time in places where they can stay in one place and play in a "wave." Formed when water in a river is forced to constrict through a narrower section of the river, waves can hold a kayaker on their crest, allowing her to remain in one place in the river and "surf." Many towns have found that with a few alterations, they can create their own wave in the middle of their commercial district, drawing crowds of people to the river who would support local businesses. A recent study in Golden, Colorado, found that an investment of $170,000 in a kayak park brings over $1.7 million each year into the local economy.[92] Similar numbers have been reported for other towns in Colorado as well.[93] Some firms now specialize solely in the building of kayak parks. A whitewater park on the Station Mill site would not only bring people to patronize any restaurants or stores on the site, but would also likely provide enough demand to support an outfitting store on the site.

A whitewater feature in Williamstown would not have to be large. The cost of construction varies in proportion to the size of the project. The smallest feature would be around $10,000, while a larger series of features would cost more in the range of $200,000.[94] With the relatively low volume of the Hoosic, and rural character of Williamstown, a large development would not be advised. There is a large boating community in the Northern Berkshires, who would drive an hour into Williamstown for an afternoon of kayaking. Whenever any of the nearby rivers have a dam release, crowds pour into it to enjoy a day of boating. Zoar Outfitters, a river ship in Charlemont, in an average year, sells 250 canoes and kayaks, rents out over 1,000, and takes over 9,000 people rafting each year.[95] The Deerfield river in Charlemont runs on a schedule of dam releases. For most of the summer, the only time that kayaking, canoeing, or

[92] Gary Lacy, principle, Recreational Engineering inc. email.
[93] *Ibid.*
[94] Recreation Engineering website www.wwparks.comvisited 11/12/03
[95] Email with Bruce Lassels, employee of Zoar Outfitters, Nov 25, 2003.

rafting the river is possible is the weekend days when the dams release water. With so few days available for river use and so many people in the river, there is strong evidence for the growing popularity of canoeing and kayaking in Western Massachusetts. Certainly some people who would go to Zoar near Charlemont on a Saturday would choose to come to Williamstown instead, especially when the river in Williamstown will have enough water to boat every day of the week, not just at the whim of a dam engineer. Canoeing would also be enhanced by a small feature. It would add challenge and excitement to a run down the Hoosic. For those who would rather have an entirely smooth ride, it would be extremely easy to portage, or one could even enter the river at a launch below the wave.

A whitewater park would be a larger investment than just a park and a canoe launch, but it would be a unique attraction to bring people into the Station Mill district. A whitewater park would require about a three foot drop in the river.[96] At the back of the site (the southeast side), at the same place where the riverbank grade is low enough to support a canoe launch, the river finishes a small bend. At the end of the turn there is a drop that would almost certainly be sufficient for the construction of a wave. In fact, naturally occurring in the river at that spot are all of the hydrological features that come along with a wave, just on a scale smaller than is appropriate for kayaking. Some alteration of the streambank and river bottom would be required, but there is a strong potential for a relatively simple creation of a whitewater feature.

While a drop in the river is part of the criteria for a successful kayak feature, a substantial river flow is another. Fortunately, the flow in the Hoosic river is adequate for a whitewater feature. Late July and August river flows dip down a little below the requisite 100 cubic feet per second, but late summer low flows happen in every place with a whitewater feature. In Massachusetts, as opposed to Colorado, there is at least always the potential for a rainy spell to

[96] Recreation Engineering website www.wwparks.com visited 11/12/03

bring the level back up to a point where a wave would exist. Even in times where a feature would be too low, however, the river would still be a fun boat trip.

The municipal and state regulations for the creation of a kayak park would be similar to those for a canoe launch. Approval from the zoning board of appeals would be necessary. Additionally, there would be modifications to the riverbank, so the conservation commission would be involved, and an NOI would be required. Also, the unprecedented nature of kayak parks in Massachusetts may make the Department of Environmental Protection more involved in the process than they would be in a canoe launch. Although the modification to the river bottom would be minimized as much as possible, and done in an environmentally conscious manner, nonetheless, there will be people who oppose it on environmental grounds.

If a community park and river access were not enough recreation potential for the Station Mill site, it is also the ideal location to house a bike trail from North Adams through North Pownal. There are currently plans to build a trail system connecting Cheshire, Adams, North Adams, Williamstown, and even Pownal. The Station Mill could potentially be a key location for a bike trail in Williamstown. A bike trail along the river on the Station Mill site would bring people who would patronize any businesses in the area while they stop to enjoy the park. Bike trails alone have brought prosperity to towns whose economies had been lagging.[97] The planning for the bike trail system in Berkshire County is beyond the scope of redevelopment of the station mill. Any developer considering the project should consider courting the trail onto their site. With little more than a property easement and permission from the zoning board of appeals, there could be hundreds of people biking past the station mill every day, bringing in customers to the shops on the site. Combined with a park and some river development, the Station Mill could

[97] Craig Della Penna, class lecture, 11/11/03

become a lively business district to compliment the existing village center on Spring Street.

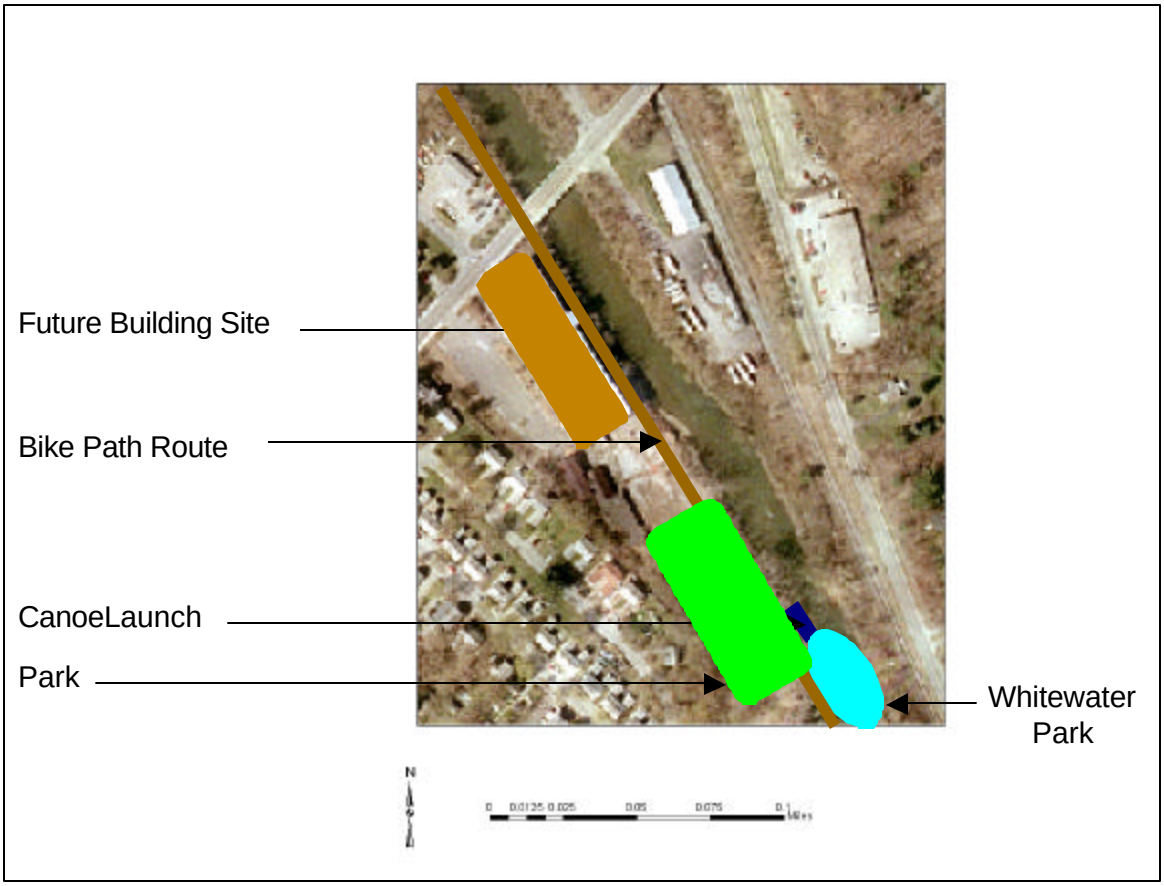


Figure 20: *A potential recreational layout for the station mill site. This should not be seen as a site plan, but rather a diagram of how each piece of the recreational development wil fit together. The canoe launch and whitewater park, however, would work best towards the back of the site.*

12. Redevelopment Proposal

The Photech site is currently zoned Limited Industrial, which precludes both residential and commercial uses. If the Town wishes to realize the mixed-use objectives for the site as articulated in the Master Plan, the Limited Business, Village Business, and General Residence zones will not be adequate. The Limited and Village Business zones prohibit multi-family housing, elderly housing, and first floor residential units, while the General Residence zones prohibit small-scale retail businesses. Moreover, these existing zones pose an additional obstacle to fully optimizing the site's potential as a multi-use area (recreation, residential, and commercial) because the zones mandate low density. For instance, the General Residence zone requires that all buildings be set back 30 feet from the front property line and 15 feet from the side and rear property lines.[98] In order to fulfill the community preferences revealed in our survey results described earlier a more flexible zone is needed.

For this reason we recommend that the Williamstown Planning Board amend the Zoning By-Law to include a unique zone known as a Planned Unit Development. The Massachusetts Historical Commission defines a Planned Unit Development as "a fully planned community, residential, commercial, industrial, or mixed-use in nature. The district is flexible in terms of dimensions, uses, and designs."[99] Multiple towns in Massachusetts have recognized the advantages of the Planned Unit Development, most important of which is greater community involvement in the planning and design of a new development. Amesbury, for example, has used the Planned Unit Development to renovate its historical mill buildings and convert them into assisted living housing and commercial space. If and when the Williamstown Planning Board decides to incorporate the Planned Unit Development into the Williamstown Zoning By-Law, we recommend that the Photech site promptly be granted such zoning status.

[98] Williamstown Chapter 70 Zoning. Article III. Use Regulation Schedule. 70-3.3.
[99] Galvin, William Francis. "Preservation through Bylaws and Ordinances: Tools and Techniques for Preservation Used by Communities in Massachusetts." Massachusetts Historical Commission. July 5, 2001.

In developing a site plan we sought to be as faithful as possible to the results of our community survey and the goals outlined in the Master Plan. Our site plan consists of four major components. We recommend reconstruction of Building 1 (3 stories), renovation of the Cube (4 stories), construction of five townhouses/brownstones (3 stories), and provision of access to the site and exit from the site via a one-way street. Moreover, when considering modifications to our proposal or envisioning an entirely different proposal, one must remain cognizant of the following three site limitations. 1) A sewer easement runs along the entire western edge of the site. No buildings can be constructed on the easement. 2) The 100-year floodplain extends over a portion of the southeastern corner of Building 1 and covers much of the southeastern portion of the site. 3) The site is located in a confined aquifer protection district. As a result, a special permit is necessary in order to increase impervious surface cover above 15 percent of the site's total area.[100] The total area of the site is 9.9 acres.[101] Therefore, 1.5 acres constitutes 15% of the site's area. Our proposal would render approximately 50 percent of the site impervious. Although this impervious area exceeds the limit allowed in the confined aquifer protection district, our proposal does not increase the area of impervious cover currently on the site and may actually decrease it. Professor Henry Art, a member of the Conservation Commission, has indicated that the Commission would likely approve a proposal as long as it does not expand the site's existing impervious cover nor violate other conservation regulations.[102]

Reconstructing Building 1 with 3 stories and renovating the Cube with 4 stories would create 59,862 gross sq. ft. available for apartment space. This gross area does not include the first floor of Building 1, which we recommend be used for commercial retail space. We estimate that 42 apartments could be constructed in Building 1 and the Cube, assuming half of these

[100] Williamstown Chapter 70 Zoning. Article VII. Overlay District Requirements. 70-7.4.
[101] Photech Property Record Card. Williamstown Assessors Office.
[102] Correspondence with Professor Henry Art. 5 December 2003.

apartments are two bedroom apartments with a net square footage of 1,100 sq. ft. and half are three bedroom apartments with a net square footage of 1,400 sq. ft.[103] Figure 21 shows a possible floor plan for the two bedroom apartments proposed. The floor plan contains ample space for two bedrooms, a sizable living area, a kitchen, one bathroom, and three closets.

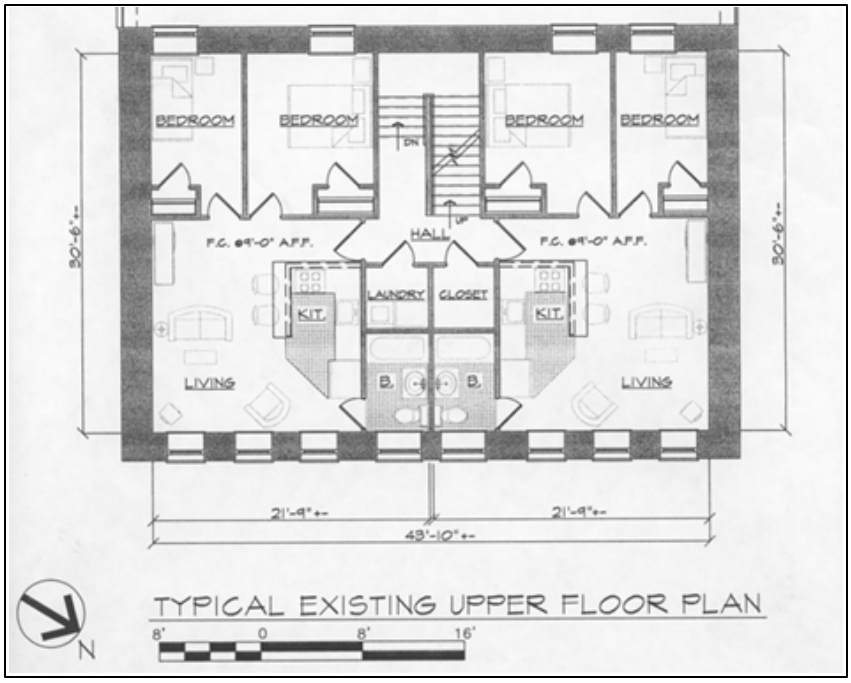


Figure 21: *Possible two bedroom apartment floor plan.* [104]

The combined net square footage of apartment space in Building 1 and the Cube would total 52,500 sq. ft. As we only propose 9,000 net sq. ft. of commercial space for the first floor of Building 1, 15,258 sq. ft. of residual space would remain throughout Building 1 and the Cube to be occupied by walls, mechanical equipment, stairwells, hallways, and elevators. If this residual space were insufficient, fewer three bedroom apartments and more two bedroom apartments could be built.

[103] The total number of apartments constructed obviously depends upon the size of each apartment. More apartments could be built on the site if some of the apartments were one bedroom units, which would likely appeal to younger individuals and recently married couples.

[104] Mill City Properties, http://www.millcityproperties.com/project13.htm

We advise the Town to utilize the Photech redevelopment as a substantial part of the Town's long-range plan for raising the availability of affordable housing in Williamstown to 10 percent of the housing stock. Therefore, we suggest that the site developer obtain a Chapter 40B comprehensive permit for the project so that the firm is eligible for state grants that can help defray construction costs. Chapter 40B eligibility requires that 25 percent of housing units on the redeveloped site be affordable. Housing is considered affordable if annual housing-related payments (e.g. rent, property tax, mortgage and utility payments) constitute no more than 30 percent of a household's annual income. We recommend that 11 of the 42 apartments constructed in Building 1 and the Cube be affordable (5 two bedroom and 6 three bedroom apartments).

Moreover, we attempted to assess the demand for commercial space in Williamstown by gathering information, specifically net square footage and annual rent per sq. ft., on vacant and occupied commercial spaces in Williamstown. This information is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: *Commercial Property in Williamstown.*[105]

Property	Net Square Footage	Annual Rent per Sq. Ft.
16 Water Street	3,000	$14
290 Cole Avenue	1,500	$10
Doc's Video	4,800	$10
General Cable Mill	30,000	$14
Colonial Plaza	--	$12.50 to $15
Spring Street	--	$13 to $20

Doc's Video and 290 Cole Avenue are currently on the market for rent at $10 per sq. ft.[106] The owners of these properties have spoken with a number of interested potential tenants. 16 Water Street, however, remains vacant. According to the owner of the property, he has probably been unable to find a tenant because of the high rent ($14 per sq. ft.) he is seeking.

[105] These figures were acquired through correspondence with Charles Fox, Paul Harsch, Don Westall, and the proprietor of Wild Oats.
[106] Correspondence with Charles Fox and the proprietor of Wild Oats.

Numerous real estate agents and a few business owners in Williamstown have indicated that any additional commercial space in town would need to be rather cheap or otherwise run the risk of remaining vacant. Indeed, the properties likely to be rented in the near future are asking a mere $10 per sq. ft. The Wild Oats food market plans to expand their business in the next year or two, and the owners are considering moving into the old Doc's Video building primarily because of its visible location along Route 2 and its adequate parking and loading space. Although Wild Oats expressed to us an interest in moving into the first floor of a redeveloped Building 1, they consider the site's distance from Route 2 a disadvantage and would consider rent significantly above $10 per sq. ft. to be unattractive.[107]

On the other hand, the developers of the General Cable Mill on Water Street intend to charge $14 per sq. ft. for the 30,000 sq. ft. of office space the renovated complex will contain. We think a comparable rent could be charged for commercial space on a redeveloped Photech site. The space would be entirely new, and if our site plan succeeds in fulfilling our design intentions, the building would be located within a vibrant and densely populated residential and recreation area. Accordingly, we recommend charging $14 per sq. ft. for the commercial space proposed. Given the building's immediate proximity to the Hoosic River and the proposed Williamstown to Pownal recreation path, we do not find $14 per sq. ft. to be unreasonably high and predict that tenants will occupy the space shortly after construction is complete.

Figure 22: *Apartments above commercial space.*

[107] Correspondence with the manager of Wild Oats.

Nevertheless, we recommend the construction of no more than 9,000 net sq. ft. of commercial space on the first floor of Building 1 considering that the actual demand for commercial space in Williamstown remains relatively uncertain (Figure 22).[108] This amount of floor area would be sufficient for three relatively large businesses. The total floor area proposed might be excessive and should be reconsidered closer to the time of construction. If in the future, the property at 16 Water Street and a significant portion of the General Cable commercial space remain unoccupied, the amount of floor area devoted to commercial space in Building 1 should be reduced. Our survey results and the site's unique location along a river and a proposed recreation path lead us to believe the following commercial uses would be ideal for Building 1: a small grocery store/general store, a restaurant/café/deli, and a recreation outfitter that could sell and rent equipment, such as canoes, kayaks, bikes, and rollerblades, for use on the Hoosic River and the Williamstown to Pownal recreation path.

The largest number of our survey respondents favored apartment housing for the redeveloped site. However, a significant number did favor single-family housing. And although the survey shows duplexes to be relatively unpopular, they do provide a household with greater living space. In order to incorporate into the redevelopment plan these community preferences for housing other than apartments, we recommend constructing a row of five 3-story townhouses opposite Building 1 (Figure 23).[109] The townhouses could be rented by floor or sold by floor, thus providing 15 additional housing units on the site. We recommend four of these units be affordable. Alternatively, all of the townhouses, or some portion of them, could be sold to single families, if the buildings were designed with that end use in mind. The inclusion of townhouses serves to enhance the diversity of housing types proposed for the site and therefore to enhance

[108] www.cnu.org/resources/index.cfm?formAction=image_bank_results&CFID=5568934&CFTOKEN=62022685

the diversity (namely by age, income, and family structure) of people who will eventually live on the site. People invariably have different housing and neighborhood preferences. Some prefer apartment living. Some prefer single-family houses. Certain population groups, such as the unmarried, the married with children, the married without children, or the elderly, may tend to prefer living in one particular housing type. Likewise, certain income groups may only be able to afford a particular housing type. If a community is interested in fostering interaction among people of different ages and races and with different incomes and family structures, it is essential to provide diverse housing options in a neighborhood. A neighborhood consisting of a single housing type with a single architectural style tends to be visually rather boring and tends to house a single type of family structure and income level.

Figure 23: *Possible designs for proposed townhouses.*

In our view, these townhouses ought to be positioned very close to the street and immediately next to one another with little to no setback space between them. We recommend

this for a few reasons. 1) High density is necessary to house a large number of people on the site and thereby create a lively mixed-income residential neighborhood that also helps meet Williamstown's affordable housing goals. 2) The townhouses must be densely clustered so as to keep construction outside of the 100-year floodplain and leave substantial green space for recreation. 3) A streetscape bounded on one side by Building 1 and on the other side by a dense row of townhouses creates an enclosed and sheltered space that is pleasant to walk along and is conducive to random, casual interaction among neighbors. For example, consider the type of community space that Spring Street is with its rows of buildings on both sides of the street. Friends and acquaintances frequently bump into each other while walking on Spring Street and strike up conversations.

In order to provide access to the site by car we propose a one-way road that would pass between the townhouses and Building 1 and then curve back toward Cole Avenue, passing behind the townhouses. The road would be 20 ft. wide with 10±2 ft. of additional width on both sides for on-street parallel or diagonal parking. The on-street parking provides a barrier between the sidewalk and the road thereby making the sidewalks safer for pedestrians, especially young children. As evidenced by the slow traffic on Spring Street, on-street parking tends to encourage careful driving because cars are continually pulling in and out of parking spaces. Therefore, people could cross the proposed road easily and safely in order to reach the riverside park, the small shops on the first floor of Building 1, or their homes. Our proposed road is 640 ft. long. Considering that the construction of each linear foot of a road of this width costs approximately $300, total road construction costs would amount to $192,000. [110]

The Williamstown Zoning By-Law requires two off-street parking spaces per dwelling unit plus one off-street space for every three dwelling units. The regulation further requires one

[110] Correspondence with Michael Card, Williamstown Building Inspector.

off-street space per 250 square feet of commercial space, excluding space used for storage of equipment and inventory, and an additional off-street space per two employees.[111] Meeting these by-laws would require around 160 parking spaces as part of our proposal. We highly recommend that great effort be taken to decentralize parking on the Photech site, unlike what was done at the Berkshire Mill in Adams. As can be seen in Figure 24, the enormous area of asphalt outside of the Berkshire Mill is largely empty during the day while residents are at work. In order to avoid rendering such a large area useless on the Photech site, we believe 115 parking spaces could provide adequate parking on the site. Table 6 shows the proposed distribution of parking throughout the Photech site and the surrounding area. If parking on the one-way street were limited to 2-hour parking during business hours, then those spaces would be available for customers shopping at the stores on the first floor of Building 1. After business hours, the on-street spaces could be used by residents to park their cars overnight. This shared parking arrangement should provide sufficient parking for the commercial space, which requires approximately 24 parking spaces according to the Williamstown zoning regulations, assuming that one third of the 9,000 sq. ft. of commercial space is used by the businesses for storage. Using parking space dimensions of 8 ft. by 12. ft., we estimate that approximately 25 parallel parking spaces could line both sides of the one-way street. As many as 60 parking spaces could be located behind the townhouses along the southern edge of the property line. If considered necessary, a 76 ft. by 116 ft. parking lot located at the terminus of the one-way street could provide an additional 36 parking spaces.

Figure 24: *Parking lot at Berkshire Mill in Adams.*

[111] Zoning By-Law Amendment. Article 26. 70-6.1. Approved at Town Meeting on May 20, 2003.

Table 6: *Proposed distribution of parking on Photech site.*

Location	**No. of spaces**
Parallel parking on proposed street	25
Parking behind townhouses	36-60
Parking on expanded Cole Avenue	10
Parking lot	36
Women's Exchange Parking Lot	10
TOTAL	**117-141**

We also recommend widening Cole Avenue to extend the on-street parking that currently exists in front of the Williamstown Youth Center and Women's Exchange further down Cole Avenue. The current space between the sidewalk and the existing roadside is wide enough to accommodate the width of a car. Moreover, on weekends when residents would likely be at home and have their cars parked on the site, the Women's Exchange parking lot, which is usually vacant on weekends, could provide additional parking capacity for shoppers visiting the site's stores. The vast majority of respondents to our community survey indicated that they would be willing to walk at least one city block from off-site parking to the Photech site. The distance from the Women's Exchange parking lot to the Photech site is far less than a city block.

In addition to the large recreation space proposed above, we consider it important to provide a smaller park in closer proximity to the housing on site such that green space would be easily accessible to the elderly and young children. This park would be located immediately east of the townhouses, where the proposed one-way street begins to curve back toward Cole Avenue. Figure 25 shows how a small park would enhance the streetscape and serve as a gathering place for play, gardening, relaxation, and so forth. Whatever the ultimate design of the recreation space on the site, we recommend that it be completely open to the public.

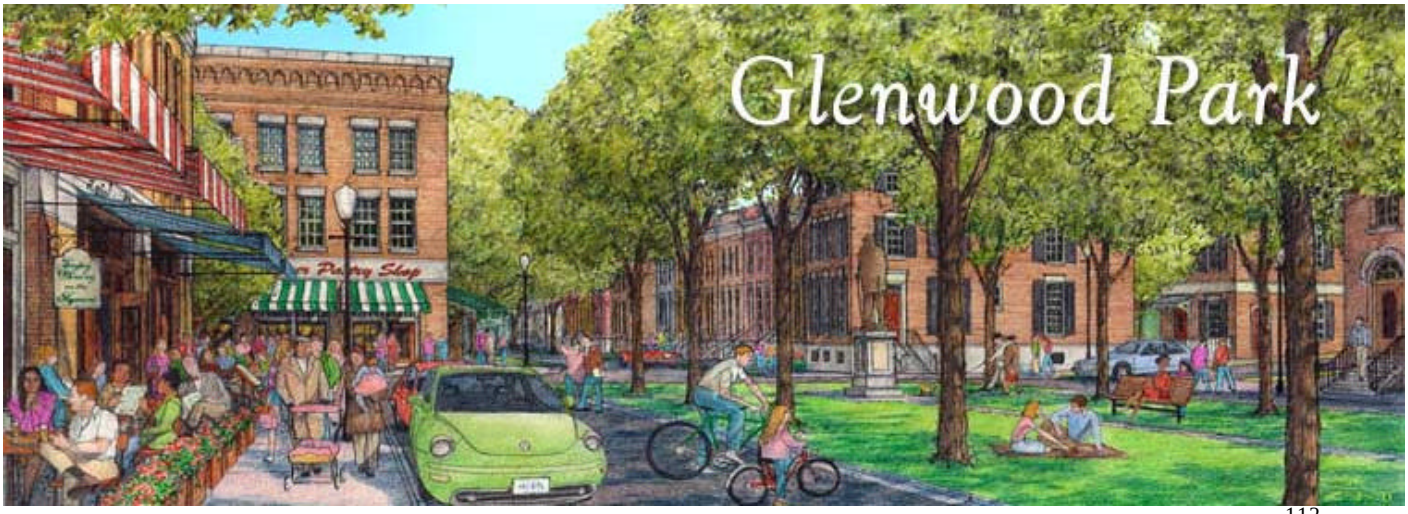


Figure 25: *Small park along one-way street in mixed-use neighborhood (Glenwood Park in Atlanta, Georgia).* [112]

Extrapolating from per unit construction costs for buildings, parking spaces, roads, and recreation areas, we have calculated a rough estimate of the total cost of converting our proposal into a physical reality. Our estimate of the cost of constructing the proposed buildings lies within a particularly large range because the construction cost per sq. ft. will depend on the quality of materials and mechanical equipment used in the buildings. We do have reasonably good fixed estimates for the costs of constructing an access road, parking spaces, and recreation area.

We assume a cost of $200 per sq. ft. for the reconstruction of Building 1 in a similar brick mill style on the existing foundation. Inspectors in the Williamstown Office of Building Inspection have indicated that the cost could be as high as $225 per sq. ft. In either cost scenario, if the existing foundation is structurally sound, the total Building 1 construction costs would be reduced. Nevertheless, the $200 per sq. ft. cost is probably an overestimate. The Williams College project at 100 Spring Street is costing $180 per sq. ft. to build. The General Cable renovation will cost a mere $100 per sq. ft. to complete. A reconstructed Building 1 (3 stories)

[112] http://glenwoodpark.com/

would be 54,678 gross sq. ft.; thus, we estimate a total construction cost for Building 1 of $10,935,600 using the $200 per sq. ft. figure. Moreover, we use a cost of $163 per sq. ft. to estimate the total cost of renovating the Cube. We consider this to be a reasonable figure because the Williams College renovation of the old Southworth school building, which is comparable in size to the Cube, is costing precisely $163 per sq. ft. Once again, depending upon the quality of the materials and mechanical equipment in the renovated building, this figure could vary. A renovated Cube (4 stories) would be 22,080 gross sq. ft. Assuming a cost of $163 per sq. ft., we estimate a total renovation cost for the Cube of $3,599,400.

The per sq. ft. construction cost of the proposed townhouses (3 stories) could be as high as $200 per sq. ft. and as low as $120 per sq. ft. We assume a value in the lower end of the range: $150 per sq. ft. Four of the proposed three-story townhouses would have a footprint of approximately 80 ft. by 30 ft. One townhouse would have a smaller footprint of approximately 40 ft. by 30 ft. The setback from the sidewalk created by this smaller townhouse would provide space for a courtyard. The gross square footage of all the townhouses combined would total 32,400 sq. ft. At a construction cost of $150 per sq. ft., we estimate the townhouses will cost $4,860,000 to build.

The project developer would earn annual revenue in the form of rent collected on the residential and commercial space. Since we recommend 9,000 net sq. ft. of commercial space for the site at an annual rent of $14 per sq. ft., under our proposal a developer would gross $126,000 annually from commercial rents. The determination of annual revenue received from residential space is slightly more involved because of the different rents collected on different housing types. Table 7 shows the monthly rent we recommend for collection on each housing type. According to guidelines established by the federal Department of Housing and Urban

Development (HUD), a tenant with an annual income of $30,900 would pay approximately $770 per month for an affordable two-bedroom apartment in Williamstown. In other words, the annual sum of his monthly rent payments would constitute one-third of her annual income. The affordable rent would be scaled down to meet the one-third requirement for tenants with lower annual incomes. For instance, a tenant with an annual income of $10,300 would pay only $258 per month for an affordable two-bedroom apartment. In order to comply with the HUD guidelines the General Cable Mill developer intends to collect a monthly rent of $770 on the 1,100 net sq. ft. affordable 2 bedroom apartments in the renovated mill complex. Therefore, we extrapolate a rental rate of $0.70 per sq. ft. for all affordable housing types ($770/1,100 net sq. ft.).

Table 7: *Monthly rate per sq. ft. for different housing types.*

Affordable rate per sq. ft.	$0.70
Market rate per sq. ft.	$1.18

Table 8: *Monthly rent for different housing types.*[113]

Housing type	Affordable	Market rate
2-bedroom apt.	$770	$1,300
3-bedroom apt.	$980	$1,600
Floor of townhouse (2,400 sq. ft.)	$1,680	$2,400

Accordingly, a tenant would pay $980 per month ($0.70 x 1,400 net sq. ft.) for the affordable three-bedroom apartments. This level of rent would only be considered affordable for tenants earning approximately $39,200 per year. In order to make the three-bedroom apartments affordable to families grossing less than $40,000 annually, the monthly rent would be lowered significantly below $980. Extrapolating again from the $0.70 per sq. ft. figure, an affordable floor in one of the townhouses would cost the tenant $1,680 monthly, which could only be considered affordable for a tenant earning $67,200 annually. The monthly rent for the affordable

[113] Saldo, Carrie. "Affordable housing at Carol apartments may cost between $687 and $858 a month." *North Adams Transcript.* November 10, 2003.

floor of the townhouse would need to be reduced to around $980, if that housing type were to serve medium-income tenants earning around $40,000 annually. We find it unnecessary for the government to provide rent control for individuals earning almost $70,000 per year. However, the Williamstown Master Plan specifically recommends that affordable housing should not only target families on the lowest end of the income distribution, but also lower-middle income families, which are increasingly having difficulty finding housing in Williamstown. Thus, the monthly rent charged for affordable housing on the site could vary widely in order to accommodate families earning from under $15,000 to even as much as $50,000 to $60,000 annually.

We extrapolated the market rate for each housing type in the same manner as we extrapolated the affordable rate for each housing type. We divided the monthly market rent to be collected on a two-bedroom apartment in the General Cable Mill ($1,300) by the net sq. ft. of the two-bedroom apartment. This calculation produced a market rate of $1.18 per net sq. ft. Using this rate, we estimate the monthly market rent for the three-bedroom apartment to be $1,600. Furthermore, rather than renting the townhouses, they could be sold by floor. Our community survey indicated a strong preference for a mix of both owner-occupied and rental housing on the redeveloped site. One floor of a townhouse could sell for anywhere between $200,000 and $380,000. If an entire townhouse were sold, the developer could gross anywhere between $600,000 and $1,000,000 or perhaps more.[114]

The total cost of constructing our proposal reaches approximately $20,466,640. The costs are disaggregated in Table 9.

Table 9: *Total cost of realizing proposed site plan.*

[114] Correspondence with Williamstown Assessor William Barkin.

Item	Cost ($)
Building 1 reconstruction	$10,935,600
Cube renovation	$3,599,040
Construction of five townhouses	$4,860,000
Road and parking construction	$792,000
Construction of recreation area	$30,000
Sale value of property	$250,000
TOTAL	**$20,466,640**

On the other side of the ledger, the gross annual revenue we expect a developer could earn from our proposal reaches approximately $1,178,880. The different annual revenue streams are disaggregated in Table 10.

Table 10: *Gross annual revenue from proposed redevelopment.*

Housing type	Monthly Rent*	No. of units**	Annual revenue
Affordable 2 bedroom apt.	$770	6	$55,440
Market rate 2 bedroom apt.	$1,300	15	$234,000
Affordable 3 bedroom apt.	$980	5	$58,800
Market rate 3 bedroom apt.	$1,600	16	$307,200
Affordable townhouse floor	$1,680	4	$80,640
Market rate townhouse floor	$2,400	11	$316,800
Commercial space	$14 per sq. ft.	9,000 sq. ft.	$126,000
TOTAL			**$1,178,880**

* Except for commercial rent which is an annualized value.
** Except for commercial rent which is expressed in square feet.

Town Manager Peter Fohlin has suggested that in order to make our proposal financially viable the expected annual revenue from the redevelopment must be slightly higher. The developer's annual revenues could be augmented in a number of ways. If all of the townhouse floors were rented at the market rate of $2,400 per month, the developer's annual revenue could be boosted to approximately $1.3 million. In this scenario the number of affordable apartments in Building 1 and the Cube would be increased in order to ensure that 25 percent of the housing on the site remained affordable. Alternatively, the proposal's expected construction costs could be reduced. Recall that our estimates for construction cost per sq. ft. are possibly too high, particularly for the new building construction cost we assign to replacing Building 1. We

assume a cost of $200 per sq. ft., whereas the General Cable Mill renovation is expected to cost only $100 per sq. ft.[115] Although the General Cable figure is lower than our assumed figure partly because renovations are typically cheaper than new construction, Building 1 construction costs could potentially be lowered to $150 per sq. ft.

It is important to note that our redevelopment proposal represents a net budgetary gain for the Town of Williamstown. Once the EPA removes the remaining asbestos in Building 1 and then demolishes the structure, the Town of Williamstown will gain between $200,000 and $250,000 on the sale of the property. We do not foresee that the Town will incur significant additional fire, police, sewer, and water costs as a result of the redevelopment of the Photech site. If the number of school-age children moving into the new housing is large, the Town might incur some increased education costs. However, the annual property taxes collected on the redeveloped site should more than cover that added cost. In order to generate a rough estimate of the increased tax revenues the Town of Williamstown stands to earn from our proposed redevelopment we utilized a simple equation suggested by Williamstown Assessor William Barkin.

Assessed Value = Annual Gross Income x (1 - Vacancy Rate) x (1 - maintenance costs) ¸ Capitalization Rate

We assume a vacancy rate of 5 percent, a maintenance cost of 20 percent of gross income, and a capitalization rate of 10 percent.[116] Therefore,

Assessed Value = 1,178,880 x 0.95 x 0.80 ¸ 0.10 = $8,959,488

In Williamstown, $14.72 in property taxes is levied on every $1,000 of a property's assessed value.[117] Therefore, **Annual tax revenues = $8,959,488 ¸ $1,000 x $14.72 = $131,884**

[115] Correspondence with Peter Lafayette.
[116] Correspondence with Town Assessor William Barkin.
[117] Ibid.

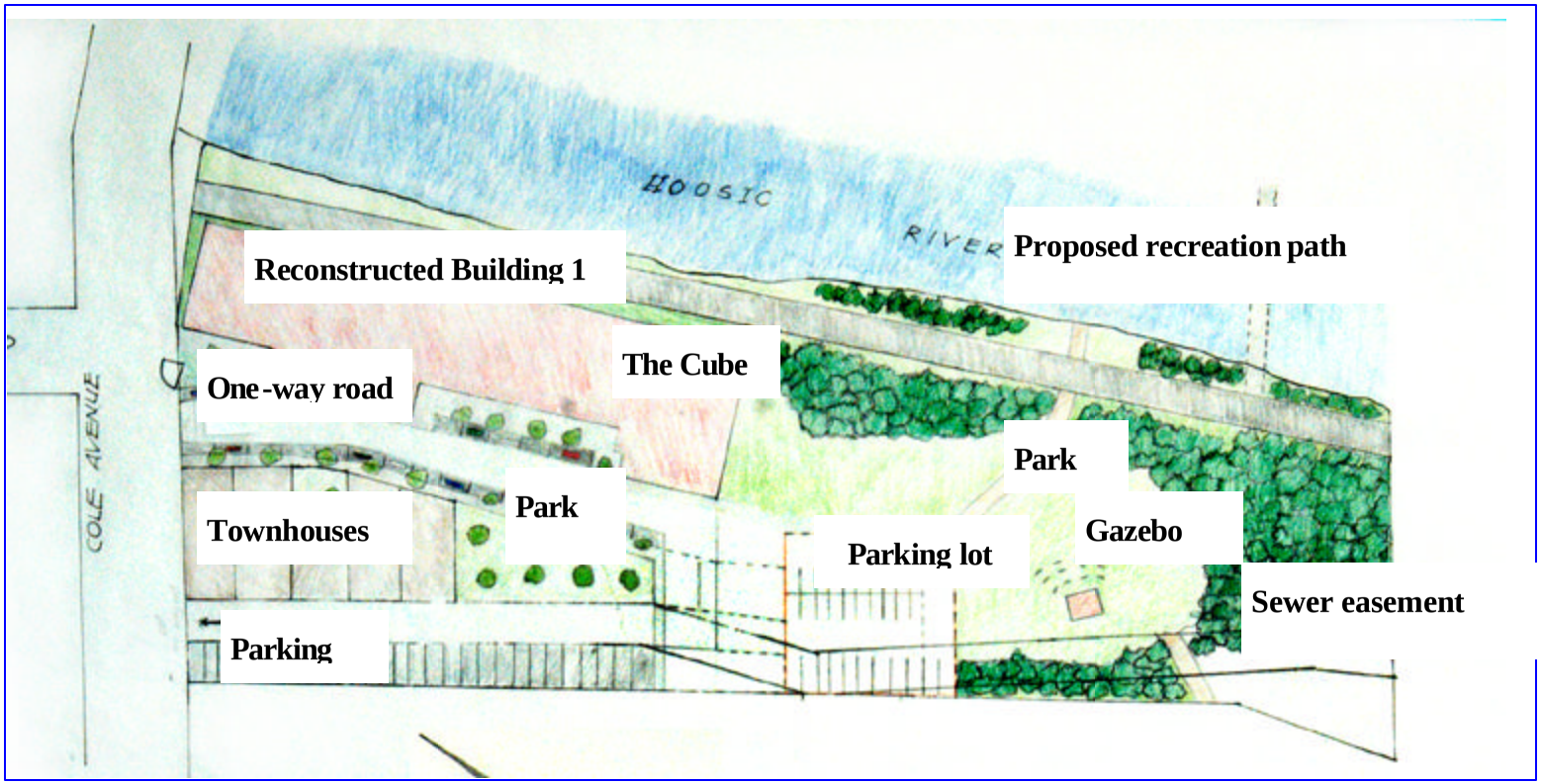
Given that we assess the value of our proposed redevelopment at $8,959,488, we expect our proposal to increase the Town of Williamstown's annual property tax revenues by approximately $131,884.

Final recommendations

Our proposal is obviously one among many conceivable options for the redevelopment of the Photech site. If our proposal does not align with the community's vision for the site, modifications ought to be made or a whole new proposal ought to be designed. Our hope was simply to give the Williamstown community a visualization of what a redeveloped Photech site could look like in order to initiate a collaborative design process with extensive community involvement. Nonetheless, if the community opts to draft a new proposal, we recommend that the following be strongly considered.

1. Amendment of the Williamstown Zoning By-Law to allow for Planned Unit Development districts. Re-zoning the Photech site from Limited Industrial to Planned Unit Development.
2. Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit, which requires 25 percent of housing on site to be affordable.
    a. A mix of owner-occupied and rental housing for the site.
3. Preservation of the site's historical significance by reconstructing Building 1 in a similar mill architectural style. Refurbish gatehouse and the southward facing tower of Building 1, if possible. Reuse original Building 1 bricks in either the reconstruction of Building 1 or the construction of sidewalks on the site.
4. Maintenance of the area covered by the 100-year flood plain as a park with green space, canoe launch, gazebo, etc.
5. Creation of nature area with simple dirt trails by connecting proposed park to Linear Park, which lies to the east of the Photech site.
6. Preference for commercial uses that meet the daily needs of the surrounding community.
7. Avoidance of large parking area. Maximization of on-street and parallel parking.
8. Strong physical connection between redeveloped Photech site and Mill Street by way of walking paths.
9. Public design meetings with participation of local organizations (e.g., Housing Task Force, HooRWA, Historical Commission).
10. A design that capitalizes on the site's unique features and location.

Photech Redevelopment Site Plan



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Bill Barkin, Town Assessor. Conducted by Carlos Silva, 10/22/03.

Craig Della Penna. Class lecture, 11/11/03.

Hank Art, Conservation Commission. Conversation with Jonathan Langer, 12/3/03.

Lauren Stevens, Hoosic River Watershed Association. Conducted by Jonathan Langer, 10/31/03.

Mike Card, Director/Inspector of Buildings. Class field trip, October 2003.

Michael Barry, On-Scene Coordinator, EPA New England. Phone conversation with Saerom Park, 12/8/03.

Peter Fohlin, Town Manager. Conducted by Saerom Park, Carlos Silva, Jonathan Langer, and Peter Endres, 10/24/03.

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Correspondence:

Gary Lacy, Principle, Recreational Engineering Inc., email to Jonathan Langer, 11/20/03.

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Illinois Open Lands project, <www.openlands.org>

Backyard America, Inc., <www.backyardamerica.com>

Appendix A: List of Potential Funding Sources[118]

This list includes both grants and loans for affordable housing and economic redevelopment projects, as well as technical assistance.

PREDEVELOPMENT FUNDS

Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC)
(617) 727-5944
- Predevelopment Seed Funding

Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) – Division of Municipal Development
(617) 727-7001
- Peer to Peer Grant

MassDevelopment
(800) 445-8030
- Predevelopment Assistance Program
- Brownfields Redevelopment Fund

Massachusetts Historical Commission
(617) 727-8470
- Preservation Projects Fund

Massachusetts Housing Partnership Fund (MHP)
(617) 338-7868
- Technical Assistance Fund
- 40B Technical Assistance Fund
- Predevelopment Fund

AFFORDABLE HOMEOWNERSHIP FUNDS

Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) – Division of Municipal Development
(617) 727-7001
- Community Development Fund (CDF I & II)

[118] John J. Ryan, "Williamstown, MA Housing Feasibility Assessment: An Assessment of the Development Potential of the Lowry Property," Development Cycles, (March 2003): Appendix B.

DHCD – Division of Private Housing
(617) 727-7765

- Local Initiative Program (LIP)
- Home Program
- Housing Stabilization Fund (HSF)

Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston (FHLBB) affiliated programs

- Affordable Housing Program (AHP)
- The Community Development Advance
- The New England Fund (NEF)

MassHousing Finance Agency (MHFA)
(617) 854-1000

- Housing Starts
- Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF)

AFFORDABLE RENTAL FUNDS

Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) – Division of Municipal Development
(617) 727-7001

- Community Development Fund (CDF I & II)
- Housing Development Support Program (HDSP)

DHCD – Division of Private Housing
(617) 727-7765

- Housing Innovations Fund (HIF)
- Home Program
- Housing Stabilization Fund (HSF)
- Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)

MassHousing Finance Agency (MHFA)
(617) 854-1000

- 80/20 Program
- Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF)
- Expanding Rental Affordability (ERA) Program

Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation (MHIC)
(617) 850-1000

- OneSource
- OneStop

Massachusetts Housing Partnership Fund (MHP)
(617) 338-7868

- Permanent Rental Financing Program (PREP)
- Permanent PLUS Program (PERM PLUS)
- Small Scale Rental Production (SSRP)
- Massachusetts Tax-Exempt Credit for Housing (MATCH)

Appendix B: Survey Results

Community Survey for the Redevelopment of the Station Mill (Photech) Site

330 Cole Avenue, Williamstown, MA

The Town of Williamstown is currently seeking input from residents about how the Station Mill (Photech) site should be redeveloped. Your answers to this survey will help Town Manager Peter Fohlin better understand your preferences for the site's redevelopment. We guarantee that your individual responses will remain confidential. Thanks for your help!

RESULTS (121 total responses)

1) Please rank from 1 to 5 the following uses for the Station Mill (Photech) Site in the order of your preference. Use each number only once. (1=first choice and 5=last choice).

2 (31) a. housing units
3 (14) b. store, office, or restaurant space
1 (57) c. recreational park with access to Hoosic River
4 (9) d. preservation of site's historical significance

e. other suggestions:

R&D complex	athletic facilities
light manufacturing/industrial	adjunct Mass MOCA space
elderly housing	community center
cinema complex	police station
parking with Spring St shuttle	daycare center
low-impact water-powered electricity generation station	

2) What kinds of stores would you want to see on the redeveloped site? Circle a number from one to five based on how strongly you want or don't want a particular type of commercial use on the site.

	Strongly don't want	Don't want	Want	Strongly want
a. restaurant	**23**	**14**	**42**	**28**
b. clothing store	**37**	**26**	**30**	**10**
c. small grocery store/ general store	**20**	**18**	**35**	**37**
d. offices	**32**	**30**	**30**	**10**
e. art gallery/studio	**38**	**12**	**40**	**19**

f. other:

light manufacturing	nature center	sports/kayak
car wash	specialty retail	gas station
bank	daycare center	cinema complex
laundromat	conservative think tank	

3) If less parking on the site would allow for more usable space (for buildings or recreation) on-site, how many blocks would you be willing to walk from a parking lot off-site? Circle one. (1 block = 100 feet)

a) 0 blocks	b) 1 block	c) 2 blocks	d) 3 blocks	e) 4 blocks	f) 5 blocks
11	**17**	**39**	**25**	**2**	**21**

4) If housing were built on the Station Mill (Photech) Site, what type would you prefer? Circle a letter based on how strongly you would like or dislike each type of housing on the Station Mill (Photech) Site.

Single family homes:

a) strongly dislike	b) mildly dislike	c) mildly like	d) strongly like
52	**18**	**33**	**12**

Duplex homes:

a) strongly dislike	b) mildly dislike	c) mildly like	e) strongly like
53	**32**	**27**	**3**

Apartments/Lofts:

a) strongly dislike	b) mildly dislike	c) mildly like	d) strongly like
26	**7**	**37**	**46**

5) Would you prefer the housing built on the site to be… (Circle one).

a) Rental	b) Owner-occupied	c) Mix of both
17	**22**	**65**

6) If a park were built on the site, how strongly would you value the uses listed below? Circle a number from one to five based on how strongly you want or don't want a particular recreational use on the site.

	Strongly don't want	**Don't want**	**Want**	**Strongly want**
a) small performance stand/gazebo	**7**	**21**	**44**	**32**
b) access to the Hoosic River (fishing and canoeing):	**3**	**5**	**31**	**69**
c) nature area with trails:	**4**	**4**	**28**	**71**
d) playground:	**7**	**22**	**36**	**40**
e) bike trail along River:	**3**	**6**	**33**	**66**
f) swimming pool:	**25**	**33**	**23**	**21**

g) other: community bake oven, farmers market, nature center, botanical garden, playing fields, picnic area (w/ benches), skateboard park, basketball courts, natural pond (for swimming), ice rink, food/water station for hikers

7) The redevelopment of the Station Mill (Photech) Site will be successful to the extent that it is guided by community input. Please feel free to write any suggestions you may have for the redevelopment of the site.

Once again, thank you for your input. Please return the survey by mail preferably by ***Wednesday, Nov. 19th*** *in the enclosed envelope addressed to the Center for Environmental Studies. No postage is necessary.*

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Sarah Gardner and Hank Art for their invaluable assistance and knowledge as members of Williamstown's Planning Board and the Conservation Commission. Also, thank you to our classmates of Fall 2003 ENVI 302 for your support and input.

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