



Haverhill

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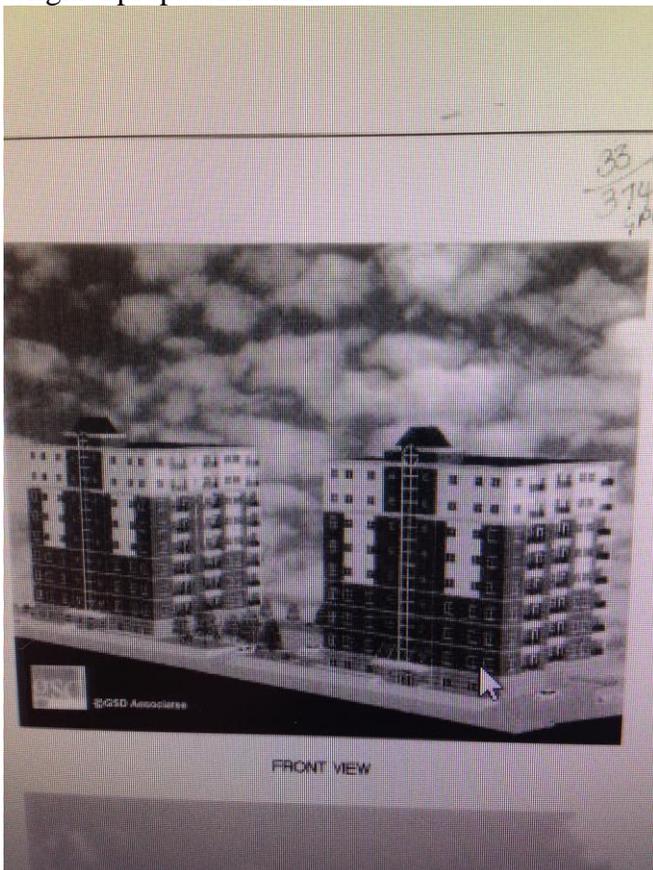
City Waterfront Rezoning pays dividends: New project proposing Public Park and Merrimack River Docks a result

When the City undertook the rezoning of the Merrimack River waterfront, a primary goal of the project was to create public access and public space along the riverfront. The proposed project at 85 Water Street is poised to accomplish just that.

For over a decade, the owner of the former Friend's Landing site in Haverhill has been proposing to redevelop the site into riverfront housing. The original proposal, made in 2003, provided for two ten story residential developments along the waterfront.

Those proposed ten story towners covered over 70% of the site with buildings. It provided for minimal open space, no park and no docks. When it came up for a vote on the city council in 2003, Mayor Fiorentini, then a city councilor, cast one of only two votes against the project stating that it would largely block the view of the river forever.

Original proposal from 2003





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In the twelve years since the project was first proposed, the owner/developer made a number of proposals to restart the development, each of which was opposed by the Fiorentini administration. The city is currently defending a lawsuit brought by the developer against the Board of Appeals for denying a variance for two six story towers.

A year and a half ago, the Mayor proposed, and the city council adopted, a new waterfront zoning ordinance. At that time, the Mayor said “the river belongs to all of us, not just to those fortunate enough to own property along the waterfront.” Under the new ordinance, growth and development along the waterfront was severely restricted unless the developer gave the city waterfront access or a water front park.

Tuesday night, the city council will consider the first project proposed under the new waterfront zoning law. That new project cuts down the proposed development from two buildings to one, cuts the number of units from 80 to 59, and permanently establishes almost 70% of the site as open space in the form of a beautiful public park. The proposal calls for the developer to create and build a park, and to make a contribution for new public docks along the waterfront.

The mayor, as part of the zoning for this project required the use of a peer reviewer, Steve Cecil of the Cecil Group in Boston was hired to be the reviewer. “That part of the new ordinance allowing for peer review played a major role in the development of this project” stated Mayor Fiorentini.

Mayor Fiorentini, who in the past has steadfastly opposed any redevelopment of this project, stated that this is a greatly improved project and one that he could support.

“This project will provide the citizens of Haverhill with a new waterfront park, docks, and access to the waterfront. It means that a major gateway to the city will have waterfront access and a place where all of our citizens, not just those who live next to it, can enjoy the waterfront.

The waterfront rezoning which we passed will reap dividends all up and down the waterfront. This is the first, but it will not be the last, proposed project that will allow for the public to forever be able to view and enjoy the river which is our most precious asset. The rezoning is beginning to pay the kind of dividend we expected when we put it forward” the Mayor said.



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Proposed Development before rezoning



Proposed development after rezoning



Proposed new project rear view

