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Project of the Month: TFMoran receives approval for new development - Goffe Mill Plaza in Bedford, N.H.

November 28, 2014 - Retail

A Whole Foods Market was recently approved by the town of Bedford, anchoring a mixed-use development on the site of the former Wayfarer Inn on South River Rd. Approved along with the new 40,000 s/f food store are two restaurants, an 8,800 s/f retail building, a bank, 7,564 s/f fitness center, and 73 apartment units.

The historic Wayfarer site occupies 16.2 acres across Bowman Brook between South River Rd. and the FE Everett Turnpike in Bedford. The site was originally developed in 1744 by Colonel John Goffe, who obtained the property for his service in the French and Indian Wars. The Goffe family constructed two stone dams and a mill pond, where they operated a gristmill and a sawmill for over a hundred years. Finally, in 1939, the last of a series of water-powered mills was erected on the south bank at the lower dam site by Dr. George Woodbury, a seventh-generation descendant of the Goffe family.

In 1961, the Woodbury family sold the property to the Dunfey family, developers of upscale hotels throughout New England, who opened the Sheraton Wayfarer Hotel and Conference Center in 1962. The complex included a pedestrian covered bridge just north of the mill, and retained the mill itself as a gift shop. The site became famous over the years for the local and national politicians who stopped there while campaigning during New Hampshire's presidential primary contests. The property was sold by the Dunfey family in 1986, and was closed by the current owners in 2010.

The current owners hired local engineering firm TFMoran of Bedford to redesign the property as a mixed-use development anchored by Whole Foods, incorporating a variety of other residential, retail, and commercial buildings as well as the 1939 mill building itself into the development plan.

"Due to its long history and unique setting, the project imposed numerous challenges for the developers," said Jeff Kevan, project principal for TFMoran. "We had to put together a plan that, in addition to providing access and parking for each use within the complex, also addressed the environmental quality of Bowman Brook, traffic safety, preservation of the historic mill, structural stability of the bridges and dams, and created accessible access to a public walking trail all around the brook and mill pond."

PROCON Inc. of Manchester is serving as the architect and construction manager for the mixed-use project. "One of the main concerns to the Town was the architecture of the new buildings," said Roger Lipman, senior project architect. "We wanted to make sure that the buildings reflected not only the needs of the users, but also the sensitivities of the Town and the unique nature of the site. By using modern naturalistic materials within a traditional vernacular, we achieved a successful balance of all these goals."

The town of Bedford, after several preliminary meetings to work out the details, approved the project in October. "The community really came together in support of this project," said Alex Vilas, one of

the project developers. "It will be a great benefit for the town. In addition to new jobs, the project will bring in lots of visitors to the area, and will encourage even more economic development here in Bedford. We are glad to be part of the exciting revitalization of this historic site." Construction is expected to begin next year, and Whole Foods Market anticipates opening in late 2015.

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