

Summary Timeline
The Public Process on Reuse Options
Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary (GCTS)

This Timeline is intended to inform the public about the work of the Planning Board regarding the reuse of the GCTS campus and the materials that it has produced and received to aid in its deliberations. For complete information about Planning Board meetings, the public can access recordings on YouTube by searching, by way of example, as follows: HWCam Planning Board 4.27.23.

Highlighted blue font indicates a document is linked to that section and by clicking the link you can view the associated, referenced, documents.

2018-2022

- Town and GCTS form a task force to discuss the mutually-beneficial relationship between the Town and the Seminary including opportunities for converting the Seminary’s excess student housing into affordable units.
- The future of the Seminary became a topic of concern when it sold 19 acres on Bridge St. In late 2021, the concept of expanding reuse options while giving the Town more control over future development on the Seminary’s property via a Commercial Overlay District rezoning was raised.
- The Seminary was amenable to pursuing rezoning.

Feb. - March 2022

- The Hamilton Master Plan Steering Committee endorses the concept of a Commercial Overlay District at the Seminary.
- The Seminary agrees to rezoning the property in cooperation with Town leaders and Planning Board while possibly retaining some of the property to continue its mission.

May 2022

- The Seminary announces intent to sell all or a portion of its 103-acre Hamilton campus.
- It appeared before the Planning Board to discuss creating a Commercial Overlay District allowing commercial/residential redevelopment reuse options.

June 2022

- Harborlight Community Partners, Inc. applies to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a change of use and variances for the seminary’s six student housing buildings (209 units) to redevelop as affordable housing.

July 2022

- Seminary President Sunquist meets with abutters to discuss their hopes and concerns about potential reuse of the property.

July- August 2022

- GCTS and Town officials begin discussions on pursuing an independent assessment of the “highest and best reuse” of the property to maximize social, environmental, and economic benefits to the Town and Seminary.
- The group agree to jointly finance outside expertise to conduct a strategic assessment of viable commercial and residential development options.

September 2022

- The ZBA indicates it is unlikely to grant variances, and Harborlight Community Partners withdraws its application.
- The Seminary and Harborlight Community Partners voluntarily terminate their agreement for the sale of the student housing apartments.

October 2022

- [The Town and Seminary engage Barry Abramson and David Gamble as Consultants to perform a market assessment of potential real estate reuse options, including cost-benefit and physical analyses of the site.](#)
- [On October 18, 2022, the Board reviews a memorandum from Emil Dahlquist regarding the goal of the reuse initiative and the importance of site assessment.](#)
- Rick Mitchell reports that an informal abutters’ meeting occurred earlier in the evening of October 18, 2022.

November 2022

- [The Planning Board, on November 1, 2022 invites the Consultants to appear before it to discuss the reuse initiative, reviews a memorandum from Rick Mitchell regarding the framework and action steps for the Strategic Plan, the handout distributed to abutters, and discusses general preferences and principles for reuse and site assessment.](#)
- On November 19, 2022, the Planning Board tours the campus and many of its buildings with Seminary representatives.
- The Consultants conduct a public meeting with abutters to seek input on preferences for preservation and reuse and then hold a public workshop on November 14, 2022 at the Community House seeking additional input on preservation/reuse preferences.

December 2022

- The Planning Board considers the intricacies of how a bylaw might be drafted following submission of the Consultants’ final report, the Planning Board publicly discusses site context and bylaw reuse options at its meetings on December 6th and December 20th.
- [The Planning Board receives a memorandum, dated December 19, 2022, regarding Massachusetts law involving “contract zoning” and “spot zoning.”](#)

- [Emil Dahlquist presents a PowerPoint regarding site assessment and coding options.](#)
- [The Consultants produce a Campus Plan Clusters map, with draft guidelines of redevelopment principles created after the first community workshop, and the Town Manager transmits a Primer on progress to date.](#)

January 2023

- The Town hires a land use attorney to advise Town and Planning Board on development of bylaw options and a Development Agreement for reuse of the property.
- [Emil Dahlquist continues his PowerPoint presentation. On January 3, 2023.](#)
- [The Planning Board conducts a visioning session on January 10, 2023, developing a list of Preference, referencing the Heritage Landscape, buffers, and public access, following receipt of materials from Emil Dahlquist.](#)
- The Planning Board and the Select Board have a joint meeting on January 17, 2023 and hear from Barry Abramson and Jon Witten.
- The Planning Board transmits substantial information to the Select Board for its review and prepares a PowerPoint prior to the meeting and provides a synopsis of the meeting.
- [The Consultants conduct a second public community workshop at the Community House on January 26th.and present a draft market and cost/benefit assessment of potential commercial/residential reuse options.](#)
- The Town and the Seminary begin negotiating a Development Agreement to frame and address development restrictions and allowances outside traditional zoning.

February 2023

- The Consultants produce a Multiuse Buildout Comparison Chart with development scenarios and maps and cost/benefit analysis of various market-based reuse options.
- [The Planning Board summarizes information and produces Illustrative Buildout maps showing alternative development intensities that respond to the consultants' development scenarios.](#)
- The Planning Board seeks information and makes recommendations to the Select Board regarding the contents of the Development Agreement. [3-7-23-Development Agreements and Questions.docx](#), [Legal Clarifications Sought by the Planning Board -2023.pdf](#)
- Attorney Jon Whitten discusses Overlay District and Development Agreement with the Planning Board.
- [The Planning, Board, on February 23rd demonstrates that its 'Preferences' can be honored even with substantial density.](#)
- [The Planning Board receives a proposed subdivision plan from Toll Brothers.](#)

March 2023

- The Planning Board and the Select Board hold a joint meeting on March 7th where both the Planning Board and the Seminary make presentations. [03-07-23 - Meeting Material.docx](#), [2-14-23 - Hamilton Seminary Multi-Use Program Scenarios Evaluation.pdf](#), [3-7-23 SeminaryPresentation.pptx](#)
- The Seminary indicates that it has engaged in a “right-sizing” endeavor and retains the right to remain on the site; Jon Whitten discusses Development Agreement and zoning, identifying issues such as water and wastewater as topics for the Development Agreement. David Gamble makes remarks.
- Attorney Whitten states the Overlay District requires a map with definitive edges for different zones. identifies and zoning. David Gamble also makes remarks.

April 2023

- [The Consultants submit their final report on the strategic assessment of reuse options at the Seminary.](#)
- The Planning Board continues public meetings refining its land use plan and potential commercial and residential uses that could be incorporated into a draft Overlay District bylaw.
- The Planning Board produces Brown’s Hill Zoning Maps A and B, Table of Zones and considers a Memorandum, dated April 4th that contains concepts for consideration and an outline of a draft overlay district. [4-4-23 - Brown's Hill Zoning Map 'A'.pdf](#), [4-4-23 - Brown's Hill Zoning Map 'B' with Roads.pdf](#), [4-04-23 - Table of Zones.pdf](#), [4-4-23 Memo to Planning Board by Marnie Crouch, Chair.pdf](#)
- On April 27, 2023, the Planning Board holds another public session with Select Board to discuss process, schedule, and reuse options being considered at which abutters express concerns.

NEXT STEPS

May 2023 - The Planning Board will expand its deliberations by conducting its public hearing at the Hamilton Wenham Library Meeting Room to accommodate more citizens and enable the Planning Board to assess the scale of development that citizens would like to see on the site.

June 14, 2023 - Town Meeting, - the Planning Board will present an overview of the process in developing the proposed Overlay District bylaw, as well as, key elements of the “draft” of proposed Brown’s Hill Overlay District language currently being considered.

June – October 2023 - The Planning Board will continue holding in person public hearings, consulting with all parties on the proposed bylaw with the goal of reaching consensus and presenting voters an Overlay District Bylaw for their approval at the fall Special Town Meeting.