



## Planning Board OKs final phase of Portwalk

By Charles McMahon  
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PORTSMOUTH — The Planning Board on Thursday night approved the third and final phase of Portwalk, clearing the way for the major downtown development to begin construction as early as this fall.

Approval of the large-scale, mixed-use development comes after months of work between project officials from Cathartes Private Investments and the city's various land use boards.

Planning Board members took little time approving the site review application Thursday night. The proposal had most recently been postponed by the Planning Board at a meeting in mid-December, after planners expressed concerns over whether the project met zoning laws. A recent decision from the city's Legal Department, however, affirmed the project is in accordance with the city's zoning ordinance.

The project involves the construction of a five-story, 71,500-square-foot building abutting Hanover and Deer streets and Maplewood Avenue. It includes room for a 124-room hotel, 92 residential units and 10,335 square feet of mixed retail/restaurant use. The proposal also includes a surface-level parking deck and a one-story underground parking garage.

Planning Board members were less critical of the proposal at Thursday night's meeting. Some members even offered praise to developers for amending site plans throughout the process to include relocation of generators and an entrance to a trash room.

Another change announced at the meeting involved the addition of retail space along Maplewood Avenue.

One stipulation of approval involved developers making an archaeological analysis conducted on the property available to the city and the state Division of Historic Resources. Planners asked that the development team also follow through on any recommendations included in the study relative to artifacts being found on the property.

After approving the project, Planning Board Chairman John Ricci thanked the development team for their work with the city over the past several months.

"I think this is a much better plan than last month's proposal," said Ricci.

Scott Tranchemontagne, spokesman for Cathartes Private Investment, said the development team is pleased it can move ahead with its plans to complete the entire Portwalk project.

"This is a strong project for us and for the city," said Tranchemontagne. "There's still a lot of work to be done. Some people would look at this as the last step, but it's really the first step for us."

Tranchemontagne said the next steps for the project include fully designing it as well as securing financing. He said that, if all goes to plan, the project could break ground in the fall.

Once started, Tranchemontagne said the construction schedule would likely last 18 months.

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