

Hallowell Planning Board to consider project for final original Stevens Commons building

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By Sam Shepherd
Kennebec Journal

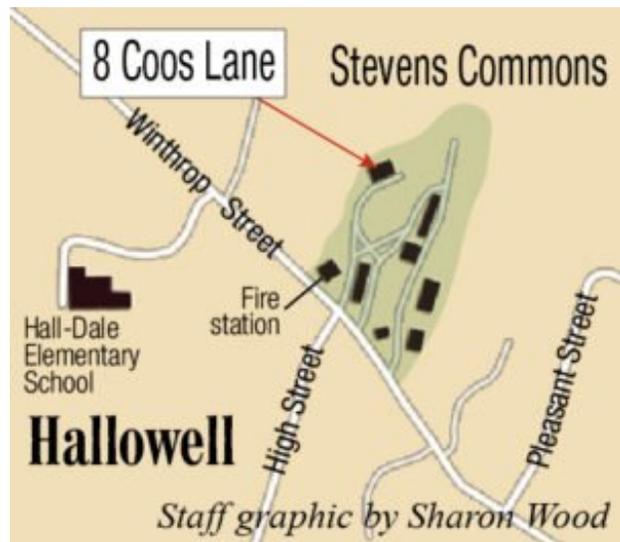
June 15, 2020

HALLOWELL — The Hallowell Planning Board will get a look this week at plans for the final original building at Stevens Commons, which the developer is looking to convert into apartments.

The single-story, 6,061-square-foot Cleveland Building is at 8 Coos Lane, near the entrance to the recreational trails, behind the city's fire station near the northwestern section of the Stevens Commons complex.

A site plan shows that the property would be divided into eight apartments — four one-bedroom and four two-bedroom units.

Developer Matt Morrill said the apartments would likely be available in the spring of 2021, pending Planning Board approval.



On Wednesday, a public hearing will take place at a meeting of the city's Planning Board to discuss the development before the board will review the project's site plan. The meeting will take place through the Zoom platform at 6:30 p.m., and a link to the video stream is available at the [city's website](#).

Morrill said his company, Mastway Development, will own the apartments, which will be "market rate," a term he said generally described nonsubsidized housing.

"We're targeting young professionals and seniors," Morrill said. "It would probably be somebody middle-income."



Developer Matt Morrill discusses the Erskine Building, in the background, while leading a tour of the Stevens Commons complex in Hallowell in April 2017. *Joe Phelan/Kennebec Journal file*

The Cleveland Building is the final undeveloped original property on the Stevens Commons complex, which Morrill purchased from the state in 2016 for \$215,000. Morrill said development of the property has gone much quicker than he previously expected.

“It’s unbelievable and I’m so thankful we’ve had the great tenants we’ve been working with,” he said. “There’s just a great vibe about it.”

City Manager Nate Rudy said the city is benefiting from the redevelopment of Stevens Commons, which satisfies the part of the city’s comprehensive plan that sought to retain the historic character of the property and offer different types of housing.

“Mastway (Development) has reactivated most of the buildings on the historic quad and it has greatly increased the taxable value of the property,” Rudy said in a Monday email. “By the end of this year we will see an increase in population between the (housing) developments.”

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He said conditions of the forgivable loan will be satisfied when the Community Housing of Maine's affordable senior housing project opens, which he said could be "any day." Rudy said city officials have not discussed future involvement or investment in the property.

"We haven't had any conversations about that," he said. "It's going to be interesting to me to see how the rest of the campus evolves."

Morrill said there is further opportunity for new construction on the property. He said the next project, a condominium, could be built north of existing buildings, and will go in front of the Planning Board in "late summer or early fall." He said he is also actively seeking a tenant for a potential cafe at Stevens Commons.

Construction is ongoing on a project to convert the Erskine Building into student housing for the University of Maine at Augusta. The second student apartment comes after the first, dubbed Stevens Hall, opened in August 2019. UMA Spokesperson Domna Giatis said Monday that finishing touches were being put on Erskine Building and students will likely move into the property in August.

In October 2019, the Erskine Building had a different type of buzz around it when about 80,000 bees had to be taken out of a large hive in one of the building's walls.

Also in August 2019, Hallowell's Planning Board approved a projected converting the Flagg-Dummer building to market-rate apartments. Other buildings on the campuses house a number professional office spaces. The site also hosts the city's farmer's market and two food trucks.

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