

Project Narrative & Variance Request for Blush Skin & Soul Spa

Property Address: 408 The Hill, Units 1-3, Portsmouth, NH

Applicant: Blush Skin & Soul Spa

Prepared For: City of Portsmouth

Project Narrative

Blush Skin & Soul Spa has been a part of the Portsmouth community since **2017**, beginning as a **one-woman business in Unit 2 of 408 The Hill**. Over the years, it has grown into a **thriving wellness business**, now employing **a team of 10 professionals** who provide high-quality esthetic and massage therapy services that promote self-care and well-being for both residents and visitors.

Blush operates **seven days a week from 8:00 AM to 8:30 PM by appointment only**, ensuring a controlled and structured flow of clients throughout the day. The business's appointment-based model prevents excessive foot traffic and allows for an organized, low-impact operation.

During the **COVID-19 pandemic**, the two other tenants on the **first floor of 408 The Hill** vacated their spaces. The **landlord offered Blush Skin & Soul Spa the opportunity to expand into the entire first floor**, which allowed the business to continue growing and providing essential wellness services to the community.

I **mistakenly did not realize that additional permits were required** for this expansion. I sincerely **apologize for this oversight** and want to emphasize my commitment to **doing things the correct way**. The issue only came to my attention when the **New Hampshire State Board of Esthetics conducted a routine inspection** (their first since 2017), which led me to **discover that additional city permits were necessary**. I am now **proactively taking steps to ensure full compliance** with the City of Portsmouth.

Importantly, **no changes were made to the space** in order to operate as we currently do, and **no future changes are needed at this time**. The space remains in **its original, intended condition**, fully functional for the services provided.

Blush Skin & Soul Spa has sufficient **parking availability** for clients, with options along **High Street and Deer Street, as well as in the Hanover and Foundry garages**. These parking options ensure that customers can conveniently access the business without creating a burden on surrounding properties.

Variance Analysis

1. The variance will not be contrary to the public interest (10.233.21).

Blush Skin & Soul Spa has long been a **positive contributor to the Portsmouth community**, supporting **local economic growth**, **participating in charitable initiatives**, and **offering a space dedicated to wellness and self-care**.

The spa operates in a **quiet, professional manner**, ensuring that it does not disrupt the character of The Hill or the surrounding businesses. The **appointment-only model** minimizes traffic and maintains a controlled flow of clients throughout the day, further reducing any potential impact on the area.

Granting the variance will allow Blush Skin & Soul Spa to **continue operating in a way that benefits the public without any negative impact**.

2. The spirit of the Ordinance will be observed (10.233.22).

The purpose of zoning regulations is to **ensure compatible land use and maintain the integrity of the community**. Blush Skin & Soul Spa fully aligns with these objectives by:

- Operating within a **historically mixed-use commercial and residential district**.
- Maintaining a **professional, low-impact presence** that enhances the area.
- Contributing to **Portsmouth's vibrant small business economy**.

Since **no structural changes have been made and none are planned**, the business remains in harmony with the existing zoning intent while complying with city requirements.

3. Substantial justice will be done (10.233.23).

Denying the variance would impose a **significant and unnecessary hardship** on a business that has operated successfully in this location since 2017. **There is no public benefit in forcing the business to relocate**, as it has already been successfully operating within the space for years without any issues.

Approving the variance will **allow Blush Skin & Soul Spa to continue serving the community** while ensuring all permitting requirements are met.

4. The values of surrounding properties will not be diminished (10.233.24).

Blush Skin & Soul Spa **enhances the value of The Hill and the surrounding properties** by:

- **Maintaining a well-kept, professional space** that complements the historic nature of the area.
- **Attracting clientele who support other local businesses**, contributing to the area's economic health.
- **Operating in a quiet, appointment-based manner**, ensuring a seamless fit with the surrounding businesses and residences.

Since **no changes have been made to the building or its use**, the presence of Blush Skin & Soul Spa will not negatively impact neighboring property values.

5. Literal enforcement of the provisions of the Ordinance would result in an unnecessary hardship (10.233.25).

Strict enforcement of the zoning ordinance would create an **unnecessary hardship** due to the **unique conditions of this property and its history**:

- **Blush Skin & Soul Spa has successfully operated in this location for over seven years without any prior concerns.**
- **The landlord encouraged the expansion during COVID**, making it a natural and necessary progression for the business.
- **There are no reasonable alternative uses for this space that would provide the same community and economic benefits.**

Since **no changes were made to the space and none are needed**, denying the variance would create an **artificial and undue burden on the business** without serving the public interest.

Special Conditions of the Property (10.233.31 & 10.233.32)

1. Historic Character & Mixed-Use Designation

The Hill is a **unique, historically significant district** that has long supported a **mix of commercial and residential uses**. Blush Skin & Soul Spa fits seamlessly into this environment by **providing a boutique wellness service that complements the area's historic charm and professional atmosphere**.

2. Layout & Suitability for a Wellness Business

- **The existing structure and interior layout** of Units 1-3 are **ideally suited for a spa environment**, with private rooms that create a peaceful, professional setting.
- The spa operates **by appointment only**, ensuring minimal foot traffic and no disruption to the surrounding area.
- Since **no structural or operational changes have been made**, the space remains fully compatible with its intended use.

3. Reasonable Use & Lack of Alternative Options

- **There is no fair and substantial relationship between strict enforcement of zoning regulations and this specific property.**
- **The property cannot be reasonably used in strict conformance with the Ordinance** without causing undue hardship to an already well-established business.

Because **no changes were made and no additional modifications are needed**, the variance is necessary to ensure that Blush Skin & Soul Spa can **continue operating without unnecessary disruption**.

Conclusion

Blush Skin & Soul Spa **respectfully requests approval of the variance** to continue operating within **units one through three on the first floor of 408 The Hill**.

This request is made **in good faith**, with a commitment to full compliance with local regulations. The business:

- **Has been a valued part of the Portsmouth business community since 2017.**
- **Employs a team of 10 professionals, supporting the local economy.**
- **Operates seven days a week from 8:00 AM to 8:30 PM by appointment only, ensuring structured client flow.**
- **Provides sufficient parking availability for clients along High Street, Deer Street, and in the Hanover and Foundry garages.**
- **Has made no changes to the space and requires no future modifications.**

I sincerely appreciate the City of Portsmouth's consideration and am committed to **resolving this matter properly**. Please let me know if any additional information is required.

Best regards,
Ashley Taylor
Owner, Blush Skin & Soul Spa
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Unit 2 (room #1)



Unit 2 (room #2)



hall way (we don't use the second floor – it's just two residential units up there)



Unit 1

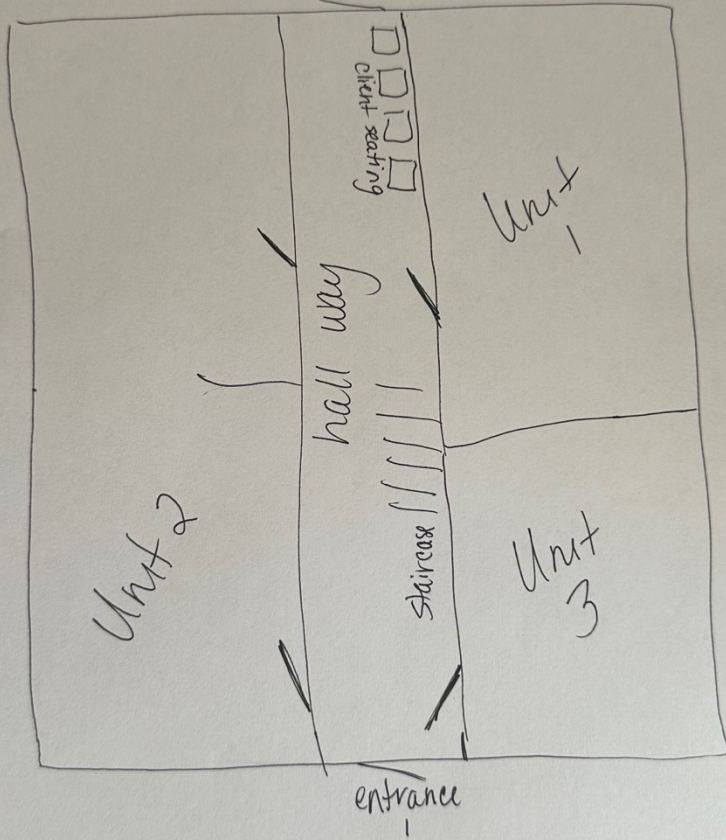


Unit 3

408 The Hill

Hill Courtyard

entrance 2



Garden Way

First floor layout

The Hill Condo Association
Portsmouth, NH 03801

February 19, 2025

City of Portsmouth

Subject: Unit 408, The Hill

To Whom it may concern.

On behalf of The Hill Condo Association, this letter serves as confirmation that Blush Skin & Soul Spa has been approved by the condo association to operate within units one through three on the first floor of 408 The Hill, Portsmouth, NH.

Please let us know if any further documentation or information is required.

Sincerely,

	<small>dotloop verified 02/19/25 11:59 AM EST AKDQ-747H-XOU6-MZZD</small>
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Douglas Palardy

President

The Hill Condo Association

603-501-9999