

November 29, 2017

Dear Planning Board,

Thank you for your considerable service to this community. We appreciate the significant time commitment your service on the Planning Board entails and the difficulty of the decisions before you.

As abutters and patrons of the Mill Plaza, we enthusiastically support its re-development. We see the re-development as an opportunity to reinvigorate this critical property, expand commercial opportunities, enhance the attractiveness of the town's core, and improve stormwater management and significantly reduce the negative impacts of the current plaza on the water quality of College Brook, the Oyster River and Great Bay. We also support increasing the residential density of the downtown area to create a vibrant downtown, protect open space and the rural character of the community, and reduce reliance on cars.

Given these positions, we are discouraged by the most recent re-development plan for the Mill Plaza. While the previous iteration of the plan suggested that Colonial Durham was making some attempt to improve the design, respond to community concerns and adhere to the conditions of the owner's agreement with the Town, the current proposal communicates frustration with the process, disdain for the community's interests, and utter disregard for protecting the quality of life in the Faculty neighborhood. The conditional use criteria state that "external impacts of the proposed use on abutting properties and the neighborhood shall be no greater than the impacts of adjacent existing uses or other uses permitted in the zone." It is hard to imagine how one can argue that packing hundreds of students on the edge of our neighborhood will not have a greater negative impact in regard to noise, light pollution and litter than what currently exists.

When evaluating the impact of this project on the abutters' property values, as required by the conditional use permit criteria, we ask that you keep in mind that the value of our home to us is primarily its livability, not its re-sale value. We love our home and our neighborhood, plan to stay here, and do not want to see our neighborhood succumb to the noise, light pollution and litter that have plagued other neighborhoods adjacent to dense student housing. The housing on this site needs to be on the Main Street and Mill Road edges of the site, not packed next to the homes on Chesley Drive and Faculty Road. The consistent weakness in Colonial Durham's plans is keeping the current building that houses Hannafords. That area of the site would be appropriate for much of the residential housing they want and failure to re-develop this building exacerbates the external impacts of the re-development by pushing what are essentially dorms to the edge of the Faculty neighborhood.

Thank you for your efforts to protect our neighborhood from any negative impacts of the site re-development.

Sincerely,

Nancy J. Lambert and Martin A. Lee  
17 Faculty Rd.  
Durham, NH 03824