

3 Pendexter Rd.
Durham, NH
December 8, 2017

An open letter to the Town Council, Planning Board, and Todd Selig.

While I am not a resident of the Faculty Rd. neighborhood, I share their concerns about Colonial Durham Associates' plans to redevelop our downtown shopping plaza.

Aside from reduced property values in the Faculty neighborhood, and based on the issues aired through letters and comments for the past 37 months' of meetings, proposals, variance requests, as well as potential extension requests, I would like to discuss three main points that have influenced my concerns, particularly those that the Planning Board responded to on Wednesday, November 29th's meeting, relative to DCA's preliminary proposal and potential request for a six-month extension in its progression of development as it relates to its plaza plan: the Planning Board's decisions on delay the request for extension; the absence of Conditional Use criteria in the Board's discussion; and the consequence of Town Planner Michael Behrendt's comments in the televised "after meeting's" candid discussion, which was Mr. Selig's decision to replace him this far along in the process.

To address the PB's summation of comments to DCA, " There's been a lot of comments that this plan, you know, violates Conditional Use. And I just want to say that there's some 'to be dones' and things to work on , but I too believe that this is the plan that can navigate Conditional Use just like the last plan could've, and I don't see anything that is a barrier to being able to work through those issues," after which the PB delayed its ruling requested for extension.

Had the PB discussed this plan's impact on Conditional Use, I think the outcome might have shown less encouragement and more neutrality in its two decisions. Conditional Use parameters "prohibits housing in the plaza that would add additional noise, light, trash, odors, hours of activity and so forth to the adjoining neighborhood beyond the current use of the site." How could these parameters not be in direct conflict with the plaza itself, as well as adjacent neighborhoods? 330 student beds in what has been billed as Durham's new town center is

anything but that, and for these reasons: the Durham's town center will have to navigate around conditions arising from 330 students in its mix. Traffic will increase and speed will increase (students do not fall into slow driver categories). The town of Durham's mission statement values Durham as a walking community, yet 330 student residents will certainly establish Durham as a car culture. Motorcycles, motor scooters, and engine revving will accompany 330 students, and at late hours. I do predict that, sooner rather than later, Durham will need a traffic light at the plaza's junction with Mill Rd. The plaza will need police enforcement for traffic, possible crimes due to drunkenness on weekends and UNH social-related events like Cinco de Mayo, Homecoming, move-in dates, and UNH graduation, to name a few. The yearly turnover of these students will cause congestion and aesthetic interference to our town center. Elementary, middle, and high school students, along with the elderly population who value walking, will see negative variables when walking through the plaza. Please know that I value all the time and effort all of you contribute to the betterment of our town. I appreciate the responsibility you assume and the jobs you do so well. Perhaps the lateness of the hour caused an abbreviated discussion, particularly when the 'after meeting' discussion ensued.

I appreciated Mr. Behrendt's candidness, because his comments validated many of us who thought that the latest DCA plan was unpalatable. While I understand Mr. Selig's televised comments to Mr. Behrendt, his follow-up decision to replace Mr. Behrendt, and Mr. Behrendt's subsequent apology to Mr. Selig, I can't help but think that the frustration with DCA's process had to have been for Mr. Behrendt to have made his comments in the first place. I am thankful that his responsibility to his profession 'called it as he saw it,' and that he wasn't unduly influenced by political correctness.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Margaret Celano