

From: [Carol Tuveson](#)
To: [Durham Town Council](#); [Michael Behrendt](#); [Karen Edwards](#); [Rick Taintor](#)
Subject: Mill Plaza, Church Hill Parking Lot
Date: Thursday, January 14, 2021 8:34:05 PM

Dear Member of the Town Council and Planning Board,

I appreciate how challenging your task is having to deal with at least three major issues at one time, each of which will have a profound impact on the town: the mill dam, the plaza, and the Church Hill parking lot.

I believe one of the worst decisions the town made years ago was to become an SB2 town. Overnight town meetings and school budget meetings, integral parts of New Hampshire's local governing and sense of community, were gone, and with them went the most democratic form of government. Now decisions are made by the few for the many, a huge responsibility. With all the Covid restrictions, the challenges for participating are even more onerous.

People much wiser than I have written about these three issues, supporting their positions with scientific data, the Designated River Corridor, the value of small forests in town, legal requirements, approvals, and Conditional Use restrictions to name a few. Then there is the diminished respect given the Durham Master Plan, which townspeople worked at long and hard. And yes, it meant to make development more responsive to protecting natural resources, limiting building heights, and having new structures reflect the historic nature of the town and respect existing properties. With no opportunity to vote for these things at a town meeting, the Master Plan was, and is, the one way people's concerns and vision of their town could and can be heard. While it may be legal to have the Town Council change the Master Plan, it feels unethical and undemocratic, and carries the underlying message that developers wants are more important than residents wants.

Having finally seen the pictures of the fire engines showing the heights and some corners of the new buildings in the Plaza, I wonder why they are not on display in the Post Office, Town Hall, and other places people go, as well as the Friday Updates. If the Town is so confident this proposal is good, they should be more than willing to share it with as many people as they can. There should be large architectural drawings on billboards in Mill Plaza, to scale, showing all four sides in situ. As we all know, once it is built it can't be unbuilt, and the damage to College Brook, Faculty development, and downtown will be done.

I would also like to see drawings of the parking lot on Church Hill as it will look once it is completed, including the view of the mammoth wall from Chesley Drive, all to scale. Again, these should be included in Friday Updates and displayed

around town. Where the lot enters Main Street, will there be a need for a police officer to direct traffic at peak times? If so, who pays for this? By assuming that many cars will take a right and loop around on Faculty Road, the increased danger to children, bikers and walkers is being viewed as an acceptable risk.

Finally, until Durham residents have been adequately informed about the visual impact, as well as the environmental, and all approvals and permits are done, none of these projects should be allowed to go forward. Saying that everything can be found on the town web site is like IRS telling us that it is our job to know what is in the Tax Code, including the implicit understandings. I feel that the town carries the burden of making sure its residents are informed by using the broadest means possible, especially during this time of restricted interactions.

Sincerely,
Carol Tuveson
11 Watson Road

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10