

From: [John Hart](#)
To: [external forward for sneedell](#); [Rick Taintor](#); [Karen Edwards](#)
Subject: Mill Plaza
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Nov 21, 2020

Dear Sally, and members of the Durham Conservation Commission (DCC),

Good meeting you Friday on the Mill Plaza redevelopment site walk. I was heartened by the number of local participants, but not so much with the presentation by the Colonial Durham Associates (CDA) rep, Joe P. He did his job well as salesperson for a very flawed plan, but the concept of altering the plan to accommodate wetlands and shorelands violations was clearly not open to discussion, nor has it ever been.

This has been the story since 2014. I have pointed out to CDA representatives more than once that, had they listened to townspeople and town officials in 2014 and 2015 and made a serious effort to respond to community concerns, this project likely would have been up and running several years ago. Even the most vocal of opponents to the various proposals submitted have stated clearly their support of good development on site (ecologically in tune, community enhancing, appropriate scale, etc.). Sadly, for six years and through nine design proposals, few substantive changes have been made in terms of wetlands violations, building size and scale, proposed vegetation, extent of impermeable surfaces, sustainable or community-enhancing solutions.

It is inconceivable to me that, as currently proposed, this design proposal could be judged to meet the Conditional Use criteria that are a required part of the process. That will eventually be determined by the Planning Board, but it's worth the time of the DCC to look at those criteria and put the proposal in a larger context.

For the upcoming DCC hearing on Monday, it's been suggested that I present my powerpoint slide show on the declining status of current existing vegetation on the Mill Plaza site, including the parking areas and the wetlands/shorelands buffer zones. My presentation speaks to the past and current absence of vegetation maintenance and care regimes of the Plaza owners and managers and their decades-long disregard of sand and salt runoff into College Brook. My presentation does not speak directly to the current preliminary design proposal put forward by CDA.

I will be in attendance at the Monday, Nov 23, meeting of the DCC, either in person or on Zoom. I will have a few words to say, but I'm not sure that repeating my powerpoint presentation from the Planning Board meeting last summer is germane to the topic. I'm happy to do it if you all think it appropriate. The presentation is also available in Dropbox:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ebz7l8qkbvtr5li/AAAf9trIGWnLcU3ZGjrwLZXZa?dl=0>

See you all on the 23rd. Stay safe!

John Hart, 13 Mill Rd, Durham