

John Mince
23 Faculty Road
Durham, NH 03824
jmince6@outlook.com
(603) 389-7831

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Dear Members of the Durham Town Planning Board,

First, a well-deserved thank you for your hard work on the issue of the re development of the Mill Plaza. Your ability to listen with intelligence and respond to so many concerns and voices is admirable.

The issues are very important ones to all of us who live in the Faculty Neighborhood. If they weren't we would never be working so hard to help you with the decision you will ultimately make. Your decision will be one that's made at a specific moment in time, but we who live here will have to live with the results of that decision for many years to come. We are aware of the stakes here. Thus our concerns and worries are palpable, cemented by the hard facts of the long view.

I write you at this time in strong opposition to the proposed re-development of the Mill Plaza as presented by the owner and his representatives.

I live directly behind the southern border of the Plaza, on Faculty Road. Please allow me to explain the issues around noise from that position in the community. The noise problem is a very real concern. I have a screened in porch, about 12' by 24' facing the Plaza. Having lived here since 2010, I am well aware of the fact that the shape of the Plaza and its adjoining hills create a definite amplification effect for any noise that originates in the Plaza. When the former restaurant, Bella's, was operating, I could sit on my back porch and discern individual conversations by Bella's patrons as they sat outside on the patio. It amazed me that the sound could travel so efficiently, especially since one would expect it to drop off precipitously from that distance.

With that very real knowledge of the various sounds heard over 12 years on that porch, I can readily imagine what the noises would be like if the present proposal by Colonial were adopted. The youthful residents of the 250+ bed structure will certainly generate noises well above the evening dining conversations I could hear.

Consider this. I am commenting about hearing normal conversations from Bella's patio. These were acceptable sounds. Now please imagine those same kinds of noises, but far more of them, and more intensely delivered by the residents of the 250+ bed structure. We know that sound increases or decreases at the inverse of the square of the distance from the source. So the 250+ residents being much *closer* will put out *a sound volume significantly higher* than the single conversation of Bella's patrons. Cutting the distance in half increases the volume by a factor of 4.

Conversely sound drops off via the inverse square formula. So if the applicant moved that resident building back to the north side near Main Street, the sound's effect at Faculty Road would be minimal.

Even if we were to discount the high likelihood of late night foot traffic and the louder sounds of weekend student revelry, the noises (shouts, hollers, and hoots) from the 4 story building itself will be unnerving. Unfortunately, the noise would not stop at my house, but would express itself across the

street, and then to the next block over. It is not just abutters who will suffer, the deteriorative effects will be wide spread and significant.

If I may suggest a thought experiment: I would like to ask the members of the Planning Board to imagine that you are now in a position to buy a house: Honestly, having heard what we in the Faculty Neighborhood most fear (in noise, litter, property trash, and vehicle issues), would any of you readily plan on moving to a Faculty Road or Chesley Drive house, and bring your family here into this situation? If you would even hesitate in your mind, does it not demonstrate that this proposal will clearly have a negative impact on one of the most desirable neighborhoods in Durham? Would it not leave it far less desirable, less enjoyable, and less liveable? Would it not leave it more noisy, more littered, and on weekends more disturbing?

These are deeply negative changes in a once wonderful neighborhood. These kinds of changes actually shift the social infrastructure. They can and will foment disgruntled feelings, and eventually yes, even potential health concerns. Such personal variables have been studied and made clear and apparent by a number of community researchers. Eric Klinenberg and Christopher Alexander are two of these.

For those who wish to dismiss these facts, I ask that you recognize how difficult it will be for those who love the Faculty Neighborhood to see, hear, and experience it's deterioration in real time. I completely concur with Dr. Karen Weiss, whose research resulted in her book, "Party School," that living proximit to a university campus puts one at risk, and one's property at risk. These are not fantasies or illusions, these are measurable facts. As currently configured these risks are minimal and acceptable. But with the addition of a 250+ bed residence, the risks will no longer be minimal. They will be daily and difficult to live with.

And finally, kindly insist on valid studies made by independent professionals on the impact to the Faculty Neighborhood of the noise, water run off, and flood issues. I strongly concur with the issues and solutions well described in recent letters to the Planning Board by Scott Bogle and Beth Olshansky. They both hit the nail on the head in their insistence that quantitative studies be undertaken and results offered in open meetings prior to any decision being made on Colonial's Mill Plaza Re Development Proposal.

Please, do not allow the present proposal to pass. Insist on the changes that should have been made earlier by the applicant. We have to put our trust in you as our representatives and planners, that you will only accept and approve plans and construction that will support and enhance our lives. One more busy student residence being built inside the Mill Plaza at a time when articles are appearing about the drop in numbers of college students, is untenable and certainly harmful to our community.

Please vote no on this proposal.

Thank you for all your hard work on these vital issues and concerns.

Sincerely,

John Mince

