

Critique Summary¹ of CDA's [White Appraisal](#) "Opinion Letter"

[which is NOT the CU-required "Fiscal-Impact Analysis" (FIA) that PB sometimes confuses it with]

To: Planning Board / From: Joshua Meyrowitz / 7 Chesley Drive, Durham, NH, Jan 22 2021

White Appraisal claims to "investigate if the proposed mixed-use development for Mill Plaza would cause or contribute to 'a significant decline in property values of adjacent properties.'" – p. 1

- Mistakenly focuses on Plaza as the "subject property" rather than on claimed "adjacent properties" focus
- Looks out toward one neighborhood street *from* Plaza, vs. *at* Plaza (now & proposed) *from* neighborhood
- Claims to have studied "surrounding neighborhoods," but displays total ignorance of adjacent area
- Misleading pic of leafed trees as "Faculty Rd residence" (from spot where, w/o leaves, **7 homes** are visible)
- Provides no pictures or narrative of views *from* Faculty Rd. Chesley Dr, Brookside Commons, etc.
- Ignores extreme negative impact on cherished neighborhood wooded path & College Brook footbridge
- Displays no awareness of research on how buffers/boundaries define & create a sense of "neighborhood"
- Displays no grasp of destructive impact of eliminating buffers between family homes & college-student life
- Ignores impact of added traffic/noise/trash/hours from 258 residents on site that now quiets down at night
- Claims student voices are soft, ignoring easily witnessed patterns of student shouting/screaming in Town
- Ludicrously claims that HVAC systems will limit 258 college students opening their windows
- Falsely claims that Durham's low major crime rate means that UNH students are quiet at night
- Ignores impact of tall buildings (light, noise, shadows) 100s of feet closer to homes than Main St housing
- Falsely mentions "extensive" landscape buffers for site plan (which has structures close to site boundaries)
- Ignores planned destruction of *the* one significant landscape buffer now on site (1.1-acre urban forest)
- Ignorant even of current Plaza (thinks long-gone Bella's Restaurant & Durham Marketplace are still there!)
- Claims new façade & sloped roof would transform old "below-average" grocery to "very good" condition
- Real-estate agents cited say he lied to them re: task & client; he also uses unverifiable *anonymous* sources
- Provides sales data for only TWO neighborhood homes (from *before* current site plan submitted)
- **Ignores standard "paired sales" comparison** (similar homes next to student housing & those far from it)
- Claims to represent the thinking of two home-buying families, without ever contacting them
- Absurdly claims Durham, as "progressive" community, would welcome rowdy students next to their homes
- Claims absence of noisy gathering spaces for Plaza tenants (95' Bldg C parking deck? Plaza site itself?)
- Misleadingly cites police statistics, when most disturbances from student nightlife are not reported to police

Most egregiously:

- *Overlooks extensive research literature on college town neighborhood issues & ignores related [Durham Master Plan goal](#): "student housing to be separated from town resident housing so that lifestyles don't directly conflict" (p. 3-9; first MP to be based on scientific opinion survey, 89/93)*
- *Glosses over [Conditional-Use Zoning](#) criteria applied to the Plaza in 2013: **Must not add negative effects to the adjoining neighborhood, e.g., "traffic, noise, odors, vibrations, dust, fumes, hours of operation, and exterior lighting and glare" (all closely associated with mass student housing!) beyond "impacts of adjacent existing uses or other uses permitted in the zone."***² (details, p. 36 [here](#))
- *Claims, almost comically, that CDA plan is better than some things what would be even worse: "such as a sexually orientated business, a commercial building with toxic materials that could be an explosion hazard, a medical marijuana distribution facility or a nightclub or bar that would obviously be undesirable uses for a nearby single family residence."* (p. 7)³

¹ Sources: [Martin Lee 6-19-20](#), [Beth Campbell 6-22-20](#), [Sean/Heather Curran 6-23-20](#), [Ward Fam 6-24-20](#), [Nathanael Stewart 6-24-20](#), [Eric Lund 7-1-20](#), [Attorney Mark Puffer 7-1-20](#), [Joshua Meyrowitz 7-2-20](#). On 6-24-20 (10:04p) PB members concurred with Mr. Parnell that Board "should have an independent study done of what this appraisal was supposed to cover" ([minutes](#), p. 20), but on 7-22-20 PB Chair Rasmussen said Town Assessor [Jim Rice](#) "reviewed Mr. White's assessment, found nothing wrong with it, and didn't believe the Board needed additional reviews on this topic" ([minutes](#), p. 5). No independent appraisal has been commissioned as of 1-22-21.

² What in Durham's CB zone does/could bring more negative impacts to adjoining Faculty Neighborhood than what is proposed for Mill Plaza – a site long a buffer from large-scale student living at UNH & beyond. (Lauded Madbury Commons is *not* near family homes.)

³ College-student behavior is characterized by experimentation with sex, drugs, alcohol, loud music, etc. (w/o limited business hours of cited alternatives!). Also, a bar *is* more likely in Plaza with new tenants. Moreover, if hypothetically worse comparisons make a case *for* the current plan, then, certainly, [much better plans](#) for a real downtown "shopping center" argue forcefully *against* the current plan? [L]