

Karen Edwards

From: Kathy Collins <kcollins15@mac.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 21, 2021 1:49 PM
To: Karen Edwards; Rick Taintor
Cc: Todd Selig

Dear Karen Edwards and Rick Taintor and the Planning Board,

We are a Faculty Neighborhood family - four of us and our dog - and we've lived here for twelve years, making daily trips to the Durham Plaza for one thing or another. Over the years, we've been trying to stay up to date about the plans for the Durham Plaza.

We were so optimistic when we first arrived, looking forward to a redevelopment that was family-friendly, characterized by beautification, environmental sustainability, and commercial potential. Our community seemed to be dreaming a dream of a town center that would be invitational and welcoming to all community members, including UNH students, to shop, eat, linger and hang out.

Over time, unfortunately, this town center vision has been fading, replaced with a stark image hodge-podge of what we consider to be short-sighted, unfriendly to the community, inconsiderate of environmental impacts, antithetical to the town center ethos, and insensitive to the needs and character of our town.

We are profoundly disappointed.

For us, the degradation of the plaza began with Kaleidoscoop's deconstruction and replacement with a shopping cart garage. Kaleidoscoop was the central place where families would head after games, after swimming at the Durham Pool, on warm nights. It was a gathering spot for everyone, elderly folks and toddlers, UNH students and faculty, and everyone in between. It gave everyone a chance to get to know other people in the community. For a brief moment, The Candy Bar attempted to be that place, but alas, it closed also. As we look at plans with towering student housing, square yards of asphalt, more complex (more unsafe) traffic patterns with increased cars, we can't help but be frustrated.

We try to keep up with the maneuvers and shenanigans regarding the plans for the Durham Plaza renovation, and it's been, frankly, disheartening.

There is so much to write here, but to keep it short, we'd like to share our hopes that at the very least, the recommendations of the Conservation Commission will be honored and followed. Please don't take short cuts or accept mediocre to bad plans out of fatigue or the desire to fast track something, anything.

We will support thoughtful, community-centered commercial development where a mix of people can and want to congregate, shop, eat, and enjoy each other's company in a setting that is environmentally conscious and aesthetically pleasing. These aren't mutually exclusive characteristics, nor are they too much to ask. Other communities manage it, and I know we can, too.

Sincerely,
Kathy Collins
31 Oyster River Road