



MPSC Recommendations

This document provides the Durham Town Council a concise, unranked summary of the Mill Plaza Study Committee's recommendations - the result of more than a year of public meetings and workshops with the citizens of Durham to envision a redeveloped Mill Plaza property in our downtown.

Work Together for Success

We believe a redevelopment of the Mill Plaza that meets the interests and needs expressed by our community in the following recommendations would benefit both Durham and the Plaza property owner and developer. We recommend that town staff and their AIA150 design partners work with the owner and the developer to align their interests with the community's *before* the formal town planning approval process begins.

Create a Village Center with Quality Design

A redeveloped Plaza property should serve as a "Village Center" that stands as an example for future downtown development and provides residents a "sense of place". By this we mean year-round community space – indoor and outdoor areas where people linger to meet and talk to their friends, shop, and enjoy all of the seasons. The redevelopment should link visually and physically to Main Street, Mill Road and the UNH campus. The architecture should embrace principles of sustainability and green building. This approach holds the greatest potential for community support and the future success of the Plaza.

Promote a Balanced Mix of Uses

The redevelopment should broaden Durham's tax base through both the commercial and aesthetic value it adds to our community. Ideally, this should be achieved through a balanced mix of uses featuring an expanded grocery store, retail shops, offices, and new housing to make for a more vibrant downtown and commercially successful center for the property owner.

Balance Site Access and Flow

The redevelopment should integrate with the existing downtown and balance automobile, bicycle, mass transit, and pedestrian access while assuring the commercial viability of businesses on the site. Main Street is the preferred option for additional motor vehicle access to enhance traffic flow. The redevelopment should include adequate short and long-term parking for customers, employees, and tenants.

Include a New Town Library

For more than a decade, the Durham Public Library has been a tenant at the Mill Plaza. The Committee believes that including a new town library in a redeveloped Plaza is important to making it a true "Village Center". The Committee and Durham's Library Board of Trustees have unanimously recommended locating a new library on the property.

Respect the Neighborhood

Impacts on the nearby residential neighborhood from additional light, noise, and traffic will need to be mitigated. Specifically, given the presence of a viable alternative, the developer should avoid pursuing a motor vehicle entrance via Chesley Drive in the Faculty Neighborhood. This recommendation is supported by recent AIA150 design review, MPSC focus groups, public comment, Durham's Master Plan 2000, multiple neighborhood and townwide petitions, and decades of debate at Town Council and Planning Board meetings. We also recommend student housing be located closer to Main Street and farther from existing homes.

Protect College Brook and Its Buffer

College Brook, a tributary of the Oyster River, and its wooded wetland surroundings provide stormwater filtration, aesthetic beauty, wildlife habitat, and a valuable buffer for light and noise between the downtown commercial core and the Faculty Neighborhood. As supported by a report of the College Brook Restoration Group to the MPSC, the redevelopment should work to protect and restore the brook and its buffer's natural functions on the site. This would add value to the Plaza, reassure residential neighbors, and set an example for good environmental stewardship.