

To: Town of Durham Planning Board

From: Brookside Commons Condo Association

Date: 11 December 2016

RE: Proposed Mill Plaza Redevelopment Project, Dec 2016 Iteration

Brookside Commons, our over-55 community of 12 homes, immediately abuts the Mill Plaza shopping complex, along our entire northerly edge. Our homes and lives will be the most directly affected by any redevelopment of the Plaza. We engage with the Planning Board again in the hope our concerns will be heard and addressed, and that our community will be taken into account as the planning process continues.

As noted in an earlier letter (February 2016), in many ways our proximity to Mill Plaza is a great convenience and positive force for us, providing a variety of shopping and service functions in a livable walkable community. Many of us were excited by the potential for the redevelopment of Mill Plaza as illustrated by the concepts and drawings of the 2008 Mill Plaza Study Committee and AIA-NH. Central to the conclusions of that extensive year-long professional planning charrette were such ideas as creating a Village Center, increasing green space and people space downtown, providing more services, helping restore and protect College Brook and its buffers, possible workforce/senior/family/low-income (and *not* more student) housing, improving the architecture of the area, moving toward more sustainable practice, and other small-town, neighborhood and long-term amenities.

Given that the December 2016 iteration of the redevelopment proposal – the fifth (?) preliminary design – fails rather spectacularly to meet any of the above criteria and goals, we have lost hope that this project will ever serve our homes or the larger Durham community in any meaningful way. Over the past two years, we have seen rectangles of buildings scurry around the Plaza space, and we have seen green coloring appear here and there, and we have seen buildings move out of their illegal wetlands encroachments (what were the designers *thinking*???), but we have not seen any serious attention to our or the Townspeople's concerns. From our perspective as immediate abutters and as Durham citizens, after two years the plans remain inadequate for the Town's needs. The only clear and consistent goal has been and continues to be to maximize commercial and residential-student square-footage and income; we have seen no compromise whatsoever in this, beyond moving the asphalt and buildings out of the legally unbuildable wetlands buffer.

As abutters, our primary concerns were detailed in our February 2016 letter to the Planning Board. These are summarized below, and remain primary concerns:

- **Increased noise pollution**
- **The placement of large residential units near our community**
- **Increased vehicular traffic**
- **Increased degradation of College Brook**
- **Snow removal issues and environmental damage by large applications of salt and sand**

- An abysmally poor track record on maintenance of the soils and vegetation of Mill Plaza
- Fire safety concerns
- Increased light pollution
- Out-sized scale (footprint, height, and extent) of the overall development
- Less tangible but of serious concern, reductions in our property values and quality of life.

We ask the Planning Board at this point to do what is legally possible to simply put a halt to this proposal, which over two years has consumed a very large quantity of frankly wasted time for all concerned parties. It is woefully apparent that the development team has consistently resisted any meaningful alterations or compromises. Further, the redevelopment continues to be in violation of numerous articles of our Zoning regulations for downtown Durham, as well as in serious and direct violation of Conditional Use guidelines for development. It is our understanding that these violations will be presented in detail in other's submissions to the Planning Board at the December 14 public meeting. We respectfully request that you put an end to this apparently futile redevelopment fiasco.

We thank you for the opportunity to voice our concerns.

Signed,

Rosemary Thomson	owner, Unit 1
Donald Padgett	owner, Unit 3
Pamela Bapp	tenant, Unit 4
Diane Zirkle	owner, Unit 5
Merrill family	owner, Unit 6
Steve and Melodye Merril	owner, Unit 7
Carol Knox	owner, Unit 8
John Hart	owner, Unit 9
Barbara Siegert	owner, Unit 10
Robert Cote	tenant, Unit 10
Martha and Wesley Smith	owner, Unit 11
Jean and Mark McPeak	owner, Unit 12