

December 14, 2016

**Mark and Jean McPeak**  
13 Mill Road, Durham

**Submission to the Durham Planning Board**  
**Public Hearing on the Proposed Redevelopment of the Mill Plaza**

My name is Mark McPeak, and my wife Jean and I live in Brookside Commons, an over-55 community that abuts the Mill Plaza.

Our residential community has forwarded a submission to the Planning Board, which we have both signed. I think you have copies of that submission. Residents at Brookside feel that the time has come to halt this process, take time to reconsider, and ask the project team to rethink their overall approach.

Our additional individual comments tonight are meant to emphasize one aspect of the submission that Brookside Commons made to this public hearing. In particular, we make reference to the Conditional Use criteria of the Durham Zoning Ordinance. The specific sections that we will address are 175.23, paragraphs C2 (External Impacts) and C4 (Character of the Buildings and Structures).

We feel that the proposed redevelopment of the Mill Plaza, as currently presented, is not consistent with these conditional-use criteria.

**Paragraph C2. External impacts.**

The external impacts of the primary proposed new use of the Plaza, i.e., a dense multiunit residence, on our abutting property and on the wider Faculty Road neighborhood will be significantly greater than the existing uses of the Mill Plaza. Placing over 300 units of what we all know will be student rental housing directly next to our over-55 community will certainly increase traffic, noise levels, and light and glare levels for us. It will undoubtedly extend the hours during which operation of the Mill Plaza negatively impacts our lives.

We respectfully point out that, therefore, the proposed redevelopment of the Mill Plaza, as proposed, does not meet section 175.23, paragraph C2 (External Impacts) of the conditional use criteria.

**Paragraph C4. Character of the buildings and structures.**

The location of Building D in the site plan dated December 2016 is of concern to us. At the November 14th site walk, several members of the Planning Board stood with us in the footprint of this proposed building and noted that we could look directly into the windows of adjoining Brookside Commons. It's very close.

The scale, height, and massing of the proposed buildings, in particular of Building D, are fundamentally incompatible with the established nature of our neighborhood in the sense that a massive, 3 1/2-story tower will directly abut our two-story dwelling. That Building D's residential apartments are located on the Main Street side does not substantially mitigate their likely impact.

Therefore, we suggest that the proposed redevelopment of the Mill Plaza, as proposed, is not consistent with this second conditional use criterion, either.

While the community will derive some benefits from the expansion of the retail and other business activities foreseen, overall the planned redevelopment would degrade the quality of life of the abutting neighborhood in general, and of those of us who live at Brookside Commons and homeowners directly south on Faculty Road in particular.

None of the proposals that we have seen so far appear to comply with several conditional use criteria – those highlighted here, and others. In that light, given that the application is in Design Review, we respectfully request that the Planning Board ask the project team to fundamentally reconsider their proposal.

Thank you very much for the time and thoughtful consideration that members of the Planning Board are investing in this process. And thank you for the opportunity to address you tonight.

Mark and Jean McPeak