

# AIA New Hampshire

A Chapter of the American Institute of Architects

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c/o Karen Edwards  
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To the Durham, NH, Planning Board  
Re: Durham Mill Plaza Redevelopment

We are writing on behalf of the NH Chapter of the American Institute of Architects about the redevelopment of Durham Mill Plaza. For eighteen months in 2007-2008 New Hampshire AIA volunteers and the Durham Mill Plaza Study Committee worked together with Durham officials, residents, business owners, University leaders, community leaders, etc. to articulate a vision for a redeveloped Mill Plaza property in Durham. The endeavor was called The Durham/AIA150 Community Partnership and was based on good planning principles, the AIA Principles on Livable Communities and LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design).

Our process included obtaining feedback from four public meetings at which we considered issues such as commercial mix, housing, site access, the College Brook/Faculty Neighborhood buffer, and environmental concerns. (Some of the discussion was around the library, which is now no longer a prospective tenant of the Plaza.) We also solicited a formal economic analysis study, traffic studies, and a report on College Brook and environmental concerns and recommendations.

The result of this collaborative effort was a report that includes the studies, clear recommendations, a summary of public feedback, and concept drawings developed by three teams of AIA volunteer architects and landscape architects. The design concepts were made in three rounds by three teams of architects and landscape architects, and the final report and recommendations to the Town Council drew upon design elements in all of the drawings.

The report was accepted by the Durham Town Council with an indication that the Town would endeavor to ensure that the recommendations are carried out. It was also honored with honored by the NH Planners Association with its "Plan of the Year" Award in 2008.

Unfortunately for us all, the recession of 2008 prevented any further progress on this great foundation for a redeveloped Mill Plaza. Now that there interest has resurfaced, we are asking that a review of this document and its findings be part of your planning process. There is an immense amount of information and some excellent design recommendations that could be of great use to you and the Town as you move forward.

The report resides on the Durham Town website (<http://www.ci.durham.nh.us/planningandzoning/mill-plaza-study-2008>) and is also linked form the AIANH website (<http://www.aianh.org/content/aia150>). Several AIANH members and Mill Plaza design team participants from our 2007-2008 initiative plan to attend your meeting on October 22.

We look forward with interest to seeing the progress for this site and sincerely hope that the recommendations from this effort will be taken into consideration.

Thank you.

*Carolyn Isaak* *Shannon Alther*

Carolyn Isaak, Hon. AIANH

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