

# MEMORANDUM

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October 11, 2016

To: Michael Behrendt, Town Planner  
From: Dave Kurz, Chief of Police  
Re: Mill Plaza – Commercial/Student Housing

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After reviewing the Conceptual Plan for Mill Plaza for the renovation and new construction of a commercial and student housing complex located on Mill Road in the Mill Plaza abutting College Brook I have the following *initial* comments:

## **Student Housing**

I have attended a number of meetings and watched as this proposal has morphed into a multi-level complex with the student housing located to the northeastern portion of the property. This places the 24/7 human activity to a better area of the property. While I have consistently been supportive of the concept of housing UNH students in appropriate locations within Durham, this segment of the property is the more appropriate location abutting the Orion and Grange properties which are currently student housing.

Our experience with large complexes of student housing has demonstrated the importance of 24/7 on-site security and management. While the issue surrounding on-site versus no on-site management of student rentals is not simplistic, the Durham Police experience has recognized very positive attributes of a well-managed property when the owners/managers remain with the property and are engaged with the community! The Durham Police have long maintained that management must equate to more than simply retrieving the rental checks at the end of each month. It is my contention that owners must be involved with the building complex, the community and desirous of being responsive to the surrounding neighborhood. The management company that is invested, literally and figuratively into the Durham community, is the most critical component for a well-managed and mutually successful property.

Even a well-managed property will have an impact upon policing services. However, it is my opinion and aspiration that a complex of this nature with the housing located in the most appropriate location of the property may assist in providing student housing as far away from residential neighborhoods where the

lifestyles of students and residents often collide. When this collision occurs, there is increased demand for police presence straining our resources.

## **Parking**

The location of this complex and the philosophy of the management group should discourage renters from having automobiles through a definitive statement via lease agreements. While parking is limited, it should be designed for the use of the commercial entities within the Mill Plaza. While several spaces may be available for handicap renters, the proximity to the UNH campus should serve as encouragement that renters do not require automobiles.

## **Egress**

While there is existing one-way in, one way out egress on this property that has a proven track record over many years, this proposal will undoubtedly increase vehicle traffic. I would be interested in being able to review more detailed plans for the existing egress before rendering an opinion.

## **Additional Comments**

- In a complex of this size with multi-buildings, it is critical that unit numbering be developed so that public safety personnel can quickly locate units, i.e., Building A which would contain A120 for unit 20 on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor; A320 for unit 20 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, etc.
- Landscaping designs should focus upon keeping intruders easily observable by maximizing visibility of people in parking areas, building entrances, eliminating darkened areas by a well-conceived shrubbery planting and deliberately placed lighting on streets, parking areas and sidewalks.
- Hardware should feature window locks, dead bolts for doors, interior door hinges and well light interior corridors. All common building entrances should have locks that automatically lock when the door closes.
- Any undercover or underground parking must be well-lighted.
- Any electronic surveillance such as videotaping in parking and other high traffic areas is encouraged.

## **Final Comments**

The continuous addition of students living in the downtown area, even with well-managed oversight, presents challenges for the Durham Police Department. While my comments regarding the Mill Plaza proposals may sound somewhat negative, this is not my intent. It is my overt design to convey that the age group

that will be residing in this complex present inherent policing challenges to a small police agency.

It should be noted that the Durham Police has developed and implemented a number of programs including our nationally recognized community policing "Good Neighbor Program" in conjuncture with the Problem Oriented Policing concept. Additionally we have developed a program in partnership with the Durham Landlord Association that notifies landlords via email after each incident that police are required to respond to their property. Each quarter, every landlord receives a correlated analysis of ALL calls to any rental property in Durham for that three-month period. This allows the landlord to compare activity, or non-activity of their property to other during the same timeframe.

The Good Neighbor program allows an officer to visit off-campus student rentals in the immediate aftermath of police response to the property. The officer is able to discuss strategies that will prevent repeat police intervention and enable the residents to be less intrusive to their neighborhood. However, while these programs are designed to lessen police intervention and the need for additional staff, they still involve department employees to complete the reports, correlate the data and send notifications to the landlords.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.