

February 9, 2022

Re: Architectural Design of the Mill Plaza Plan

Dear Members of the Durham Planning Board,

Piggy-backing on Joshua Meyrowitz's submission today about the May 14, 2016 CDA meeting with community members regarding the design of the project, I also wanted to remind the PB of two additional venues the community was offered to contribute their input to the design. There were two Saturday morning events at the Town Hall in which the very few members of the community who were present had the opportunity to make selections on very trivial items such as bench styles and lighting fixtures.

When residents later complained about those superficial and meaningless opportunities to shape the project, a Mill Plaza Architectural Design Subcommittee was established by the Planning Board. I was pleased to be selected as one of 4 citizens to participate. Other attendees included Pat Sherman, an architect who had worked with the Mill Plaza Study Group years prior, and CDA consultants. Chair Rasmussen volunteered to attend the meetings and serve as Chair.

I think one of the most concerning things about those meetings was that between the time the Planning Board formed and named the subcommittee and our first meeting, the name of our committee got mysteriously changed from Mill Plaza Architectural Design Subcommittee to Mill Plaza **Minor** Architectural Design Subcommittee. With that change in name and redefinition of our charge (*which somehow happened outside of the public eye*), the committee was once again permitted only to discuss **minor details**.

Between the May 14, 2016 community meeting, the two Saturday morning community input meetings, and our **Minor** Architectural Design Subcommittee meetings, there was very little, if any, opportunity to have any meaningful input. Even the choice of brick was limited to two unattractive colors. Likewise, the color options for the clapboards were limited to just a few of the least expensive paint choices. No discussion about major design elements were permitted despite the fact that a majority of the members were not happy with the design, scale, massing, height, placement, etc.

I am telling you this in advance of your CU Criteria Review because when it comes to reviewing the architectural elements mentioned in the CU Criteria - Mass, Scale, Height, Rooflines, etc., I do not want anyone on the PB to be under the misguided notion that this is the design the community wanted or that the community came up with. It is not. This is the design the community was not allowed to offer any meaningful input on. Many residents have commented on how unattractive the buildings are and how the flat rooflines do not fit with the style and character of buildings to the north, south, and east of Buildings B and C (also part of the CU Criteria). This is a very valid criticism.

Since we have a few new members of the PB and many of these meetings occurred years ago, I just wanted to offer a reminder should this come up as a topic of discussion during your CU Review.

Sincerely,

Beth Olshansky, 122 Packers Falls Road