

December 2, 2021

Dear Members of the Durham Planning Board,

I am distressed by discussions and now attempts to remove the word "students" from all documents as if one could then believe that students were not going to be renting "beds." As has been pointed out, these apartments are designed for students. Well over half have 4 beds/4 bathrooms), a design characteristic specific to student housing; they will be rented by the "bed;" marketed to students, priced for students, and leased requiring a co-signing parent.

Let's be honest. THESE ARE STUDENT APARTMENTS.

It will be tough to argue otherwise given 7 years of discussion, written plans, and communications noting the number of beds. For instance, note June 17, 2020 CDA's White Appraisal states, "These buildings will largely have commercial space on the ground floor area with **student apartments** on the upper levels... When completed, the upgraded development will contain... **student apartments** designed to accommodate no more than 258 students (beds)." p. 2.

February 24, 2021 Sean McCauley speaks about tenant selection process, prospective tenants needing to pass a background checks, provide references from prior landlords, and provide **parental guarantees**.

Merely *pretending* this is not student housing doesn't mean it is not so, nor does it let the PB off the hook for having to consider the problems that will occur when you situate 258 young people who like to drink and maintain late hours so close to Durham's largest family neighborhood. We all know that students tend to consume alcohol, often in excess, and maintain late hours. The likelihood of increased noise during the wee hours of the night is very real, as described in Deputy Chief Holmstock's August 31, 2021 letter to you.

It is not fair to ask neighborhood residents to have to call the police to maintain their quality of life. By that point, residents have already been disturbed in the middle of the night.

There has been an argument made that non-students will want to rent these apartments alongside students. Perhaps a few younger non-students may. However, a former neighbor of mine experienced the reality of sharing an apartment building with student tenants when she moved into the Grange new workforce housing apartments. On October 22, 2014, Nancy Miner came before the Planning Board. The minutes state: "She said they were lovely apartments [in Grange], but said they were impossible to live in, in conjunction with the students. She said it wasn't feasible to call the police every night and said if there were any students living in the proposed development at Mill Plaza, no one else would want to live there."

Her testimony only reaffirms that student lifestyles are not compatible with adult and family lifestyles. We know this. Please stop pretending that these buildings are not going to be student housing.

When you go through the Conditional Use Criteria for Mixed Use, I urge you to be honest about the use and its impacts. In Durham, a college town, Mixed Use equals student housing. This has been well documented by statements in the Master Plan and by the very reason the Town Council chose to make Mixed Use conditional in 2013.

Please don't try to skirt this issue by creating a false narrative supported by last-minute attempts to erase the mention of students from all documents. Even if a few young non-students move in, we know *the vast majority of renters will be students*. Please do not ignore the very real, negative consequences for the adjacent neighborhood and our community when you go through the CU process.

Sincerely,

Beth Olshansky
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