

Re: CDA Proposal

January 22, 2020

Dear Members of the Durham Planning Board,

Since I am likely not able to attend Wednesday's Public Hearing on the latest CDA Proposal, I offer my comments in writing.

First, given the clear requirement from Hannaford that CDA provide alternative parking for residents of the proposed dormitory buildings, and given that at the last PB meeting, PB members voiced strong concern that the proposed "separate parking lot" wouldn't be able to meet the Conditional Use Criteria, I am concerned that CDA will once again waste hours of PB time and town resources presenting a proposal that is, once again, not viable.

Second, given Hannaford's demand that "all loading, parking, and other activities related to the proposed residential buildings would be serviced by the New Parking Area," an actual workable arrangement relative to the proposed new parking lot is quite unlikely. The two parcels are being presented as separate and independent of each other with only pedestrian access connecting the two.

Not only has CDA used up years and years of PB time, staff resources, and public energy presenting plans that never did have Hannaford approval, but also, now they are openly presenting a plan that once again has very little likelihood of being approved (for reasons one and two above). Please keep in mind that the Town pays our contract planner \$125/hour for his time not only at PB meetings, but for all the hours he clocks reviewing documents at home. I am having a hard time understanding why exactly the PB has agreed to entertain this proposal prior to the necessary parking lot approval.

Until there has been a final determination on the proposed Main Street parking lot, I urge the PB to request that CDA pause so that neither they or the town needlessly fritter away time and resources.

Regarding the current plan: As Rick Taintor has pointed out, this current plan has lost a lot of the nicer design features such as the streetscape elements. This most recent plan does not even try to disguise the real purpose of this project—to plop large dormitories in the middle of a parking lot within our very limited downtown commercial space. With little new commercial space, there is very little appealing for the town and still hundreds of students butt up against a residential neighborhood.

While I have not looked in depth at the plan, I will note however that having a 4-story building adjacent to the low-lying Hannaford building is not permitted in our Architectural Design Regulations. <https://www.ci.durham.nh.us/planning/architectural-regulations-adopted->

[november-14-2012-and-amended-september-9-2015](#) . Please see section Design Standards, L).
Height, #6 as noted below:

- “6) Variation in heights. Some variation in building height within a block is desirable to help break up the *mass* of the block and to create variety and interest; generally, however, there shall not be more than a one- or 1-1/2 story difference in height between adjacent buildings in order to maintain continuity along the streetscape. This limitation does not apply when the adjacent building is one story.”

Please note the use of the word “shall” which means must, not may.

I am sure there are many other design concerns that could be raised as well as engineering issues, but at this early stage I hope the PB will see the wisdom in asking CDA to wait to proceed until the necessary parking lot proposal has been voted on.

Sincerely,

Beth Olshansky
122 Packers Falls Road