

November 13, 2019

Dear Members of the Durham Planning Board,

As we re-enter discussions with CDA about redevelopment of the Mill Plaza, I would like to remind new and long-time members of the Board, that CDA has already used up an enormous amount of PB and staff time *over four years* floating proposals by the Board and the public that had not met the requisite pre-approval by Hannaford. This was a huge waste of community time and resources.

Now they come before us again with yet a new proposal, which Hannaford will approve conditional on a separate proposal for a parking lot being approved. Might I mention that the proposed parking lot is on a very steep slope which drains into a brook that runs through a residential neighborhood which is already subject to flooding. In the Church Hill Zoning District, a parking lot may be approved by Conditional Use only.

Might I also remind you that under our Conditional Use Criteria, a proposed project must meet ALL CRITERIA, one of which, under Site Suitability, is:

“The absence of environmental constraints (floodplain, steep slope, etc.) or development of a plan to substantially mitigate the impacts of those constraints.”

Additionally:

“Preservation of natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources: The proposed use of the site, including all related development activities, shall preserve identified natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources on the site and shall not degrade such identified resources on abutting properties. This shall include, but not be limited to, identified wetlands, floodplains, significant wildlife habitat, stonewalls, mature tree lines, cemeteries, graveyards, designated historic buildings or sites, scenic views, and viewsheds.”

Given the questionable ability for this parking lot to be built on a steep slope to be approved under Conditional Use, I urge the PB to ask CDA to come back to the table once the parking lot has been approved. Let’s not waste any more PB time and resources (not to mention public duress) until we are assured the project will be approved by Hannaford.

I have not looked in depth at this new proposal, but I do want to remind the Board that under our Architectural Design Standards, we do not allow a 4 story building next to a one story building:

Architectural Design Standards OVERVIEW **(Appendix to Durham Site Plan Regulations)**

L) Height

- 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 that when these standards were developed for CBD, Michael and the committee (which I sat on) were envisioning the streetscape along Main Street or Madbury Road. The thought was that eventually these streetscapes would become all 2 ½- 3 story buildings and those remaining 1-story

buildings would likely be demolished and rebuilt. I don't believe the intention was to allow a one story grocery store to be adjacent to a 4-story building. That makes no sense as far as the architectural standards are concerned. I urge the PB to require that Building B be no greater than 3 stories, thus meeting the regulations should they promise to add a half-story apron to Building A as originally promised. I would suggest that the top floor of Building B could be moved to the north end of Building C, thus creating a more gradual step-up in height.

Thank you.

Beth Olshansky