

February 3, 2022

Dear Members of the Planning Board,

Over the years of Mill Plaza review, you have received the most extensive and detailed negative feedback in Durham history (with the possible exception of the Onassis Oil Refinery idea for Great Bay in the 1970s).

I know there's an overwhelming amount of resident and expert input, but it pretty much reinforces ONE CLEAR MESSAGE.

The plan on the table is wildly out-of-scale and out-of-character with the surroundings. It violates wetland setback zoning and just about every Conditional Use Zoning requirement. It violates what anyone who studies college towns knows (keep mass student housing away from family neighborhoods). It's an abusive, environmentally and socially exploitative plan.

We all want and need a finely redeveloped Plaza. What has been proposed is certainly NOT that. And we have the Zoning Ordinance that gives you the tools to stop this monstrosity. Please reject this plan so that a path toward a better plan will emerge with the current or the next owners.

The plan before you would gut the downtown for everyone for a century or more, maybe forever. Please don't abandon the dream for a good redevelopment for Durham just because the current owners have submitted one terrible plan after another. They have tried to wear us all down over almost eight years, and we should not let them do that.

We must not abandon our hopes, nor our Zoning requirements. The path to that dream of a positive and compliant plan must start with turning down the current unsightly and non-compliant site plan. Giving a resounding "no" now will open the way to a long-term "yes" for Durham.

Thank you.

Richard Gsottschneider
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