

From: Sean and Heather Curran  
To: Rick Taintor, Karen Edwards  
Subject: Plaza Redevelopment  
Date: June 23, 2020

Dear Planning Board Members,

Part of the allure of Durham, and the Faculty Neighborhood specifically, is the fact that we are so close to UNH and all it offers, yet far enough away to still have that “small town feel” many people moving into our neighborhood desire.

Recently, my wife and our six children were enjoying a beautiful evening in our backyard at 29 Faculty Road. We grilled dinner, enjoyed a small fire, and had many stories and laughs to share. Part of what we enjoy in our yard are the noises we hear from around town. We count the bells from Thompson Hall and the Community Church of Durham. We hear music from the Three Chimneys Inn. We get nervous when we hear sirens from our Fire and Police Departments. We can hear the Downeaster pulling in and out of Durham. In the fall, we can even hear the cheers and groans coming from Wildcat Stadium. None of these noises are unpleasant and we understand it comes with living so close to downtown. We estimate that the noises we hear are anywhere from 0.4 to a mile away, maybe further.

The proposed building plan for the plaza and would bring all that noise, and everything that comes with it, into our neighborhood.

Mr White’s letter to the planning board was a one-sided view of what this plaza development would mean to one of the most loved neighborhoods in Durham.

He states that the abutting properties have three potential factors that could impact market value, being noise, view, and use. But he does not mention that these factors also impact our daily lives.

He uses his “common sense” to discuss noises currently coming from the development; cars, voices, and delivery trucks to name a few. He states that adding upward of 258 new residents will not create much more noise. What he fails to explain is that the current noises are mostly from the businesses closest to Main Street. The noises are created by people using the businesses for a limited amount of time, like shopping a Hannaford or enjoying breakfast at The Works Café. He fails to mention these noises are made during business hours. These 258 added residents to our neighborhood would be here all day and night, and I assume all year. He also does not consider that these residents, and any visitors they may have, would be much, much closer to our backyards. And he fails to mention the noise the construction itself will create. He quotes a realtor who lives and has sold homes in the neighborhood as saying that it was her “opinion that the proposed development will negatively impact property values located on Faculty Road.” Yes, people are concerned about the values of their homes decreasing, but we should also be concerned about the value of our lifestyles decreasing.

He, and others, continue to compare this development with that of Madbury Commons. He points out that “The newer development experienced only three calls in 2019...” and the newer developments are much quieter. Madbury Commons is a development in the heart of downtown Durham, not placed within the limits of a residential neighborhood. I would ask about the comparisons between Mill Plaza and Madbury Commons: how many residential

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homes are impacted by both developments. I do not see single family homes lining the borders of Madbury Commons, especially any that compare to the amount of homes in the Faculty Neighborhood. The only people impacted by the students in Madbury Commons are the students of Madbury Commons.

Mr White also discusses the fact that UNH has been one of the safest colleges in the US in recent years. We all applaud the efforts of the many who helped create this. But I ask if "safe" is the same as "quiet"? Will these added residents respect our neighborhood the way we do? Will they pick up litter, like many of our neighbors do, instead of adding to it? Without these residents currently in the neighborhood, we have regularly seen empty beer cans in our yards, broken glass, vomit on the sidewalks, condoms and even discarded underwear. We have watched from our front window as one student came to pick up his car, which he had parked on our road overnight. He opened his car door, looked around, and urinated in my neighbor's yard. We watched as another student changed her clothes and threw her used deodorant into the same yard. Just like any new neighbors, we want these residents to view Faculty as their home, but also to respect it. We are very concerned that Faculty Road will quickly be found by these residents to be a convenient use for over-flow parking.

When Mr White discusses the "distant view" of the development by our homes, he is using the view on June 17. The trees are all covered in leaves. I cannot see some of my neighbors' homes today. But when the trees lose their leaves in the fall, I can see homes that I almost forgot were even there. As we walk along Faculty, we can see the Plaza easily, sitting just at the edge of our yards. Now, we'll be able to see the lights on in the students' rooms, which Mr White said the students would loathe to leave, due the wonderful HVAC systems. We'll be able to see the signs and flags they decorate their windows with, like Madbury Commons and other developments, "similar" to Mill Plaza. He states that good on-site management can help control these new residents. I hope that "good" means 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

We have seen students in these other developments get very "creative" with the use of any outdoor space they may have. We have all seen students gather for Cinco de Mayo, pre-gaming for football and enjoying Homecoming Weekend. We've seen them sun bathing in driveways, we've seen them on roofs and hanging out of windows. I am very nervous about where we'll be seeing them if the current proposal goes through.

Mr White's assessment is also, frankly, insulting to me and my neighbors at times. With his statement, "Hypothetically, there are some uses, such as a sexually orientated business, a commercial building with toxic materials that could be an explosion hazard..." is he telling us that having 258 students is the lesser of two evils? That there could be worse things in the development?

Even worse, his explanation that "the Town of Durham is generally considered to be a welcoming progressive community. It isn't one that would likely discriminate against a group of people simply based on their age and or occupation (college employee or college student)" is disrespectful to the work of many in town, disrespectful to the current issues going on in the world, and disrespectful to the both the residents of the neighborhood and the town. It is an irresponsible statement. He is really saying, in my words, that "the Town of Durham is generally

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considered to be a welcoming progressive community, so we can do whatever we want with the Plaza, and they'll have to be okay with it."

My family and I, along with many people in the Faculty Neighborhood, want to see the Plaza "re-developed". The plan we are currently looking at is not a "re-development". It is a new development. One that will bring 258 new "residents" into our neighborhood. We are trusting that the Planning Board will take a close look at everything the CDA is proposing. We are hoping you take into consideration what is best for our town, our life-long residents, and not just what is best for CDA.

Respectfully,  
Sean and Heather Curran  
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