

Date: November 11, 2019  
To: Michael Behrendt, Rick Taintor  
From: Diane Chen  
Re: Proposed Church Hill parking lot & Colonial Durham Associates New Plan #9

On November 5, 2019, I attended the Technical Review Group (TRG) meeting and heard the proposal for the Church Hill Parking Lot and an update from Colonial Durham Associates (CDA). My original intent was to write two separate letters for each project, however, these projects are linked in such a way that I found it impossible to write two letters. **Please post these comments under BOTH applications.** Hannaford will NOT move forward with CDA's 9th questionable plan unless the Church Hill Parking Lot is approved. I'm not sure I understand why the town is spending any time on a new CDA plan (or would encourage CDA to spend more time and money on refining it) when it should be tabled until the Church Hill Project's fate is determined.

**Church Hill Parking Lot:** Although downtown Durham could use more parking options, I think this Church Hill location will not meet the community's needs. Hannaford has requested that almost all of the added parking spaces be set aside for the CDA student tenants, some of the other new spaces simply replace the spaces to be removed to create the new "boulevard" entrance, leaving only a small number of net-gain spaces for others - and at the far end of Durham's Business District.

The Church Hill forest is presently a natural buffer between the residential area and the downtown area. With a 40 foot decline in elevation towards the Faculty Neighborhood, storm water is displaced naturally. If this area becomes paved-over asphalt, that water is going to rush down that parcel directly towards the Faculty Neighborhood, which already floods along the College Brook during heavy rains or snow-melts. For any engineer who says they can correct this very real problem from new parking lot run-off, there is another engineer who will say it can't be truly corrected. In a biological analogy, it is similar to a surgeon saying they can correct a problem by operating, but once your body is opened to air, there are a host of other problems that often occur. Church Hill is a stable ecosystem now, but what will happen with its reported underground streams, clay soil down below topsoil, and possible ledge when it is massively invaded by bulldozers?

Let's consider Conditional Use. As I understand it, any change in use of a parcel, can't add additional light, noise, dust, increase in traffic, and fumes to adjacent properties. The list of what is forbidden under Conditional Use reads like a checklist for a parking lot replacing a forest. Additionally, the increase in traffic alone could make traveling on Main St a nightmare. I found it surprising to hear at the TRG meeting the various department representatives stating that there should only be minimal car movement in and out of this student lot, given its proximity to UNH. I live even closer to UNH than Church Hill, yet I see and hear the constant movement of student cars around the Faculty Neighborhood. It isn't minimal, and it isn't only on the weekend. These are all clear examples of why the Board needs to reject this destructive plan. It violates Conditional Use in multiple ways, and runs counter to Durham's claimed goals of environmental sustainability and a walking downtown.

**Colonial Durham Associates New Plan #9:** I see that CDA has removed a Building from the New Plan. Although I'm happy that CDA removed some of the student housing, this New Plan is confusing. CDA Plan #8 was sold to us based on the students not being able to have vehicles. We were told that concerns about vehicle noise, headlights, fumes, etc. were irrelevant because there weren't going to be any added vehicles. In this new iteration, the added student tenants will have vehicles. This is a NEW plan because it now involves a new parking lot in a new zone, with a significantly increased footprint. If this review moves forward, it must be as a New Plan and should only happen once the Church Hill Parcel has been fully vetted. The Board and the Community have spent an inordinate amount of time over five exhausting years on plans that should have been considered preliminary since Hannaford was never on board with what CDA was proposing.