

To: Michael Behrendt
From: Susan Deese and Louis Piestrak, 35 Garden Lane
Date: November 12, 2019
Subj: Church Hill Parking Proposal

It was with real sorrow that I read about what a developer is trying to plan for the Church Hill property. That property is the last area in downtown Durham that still has trees. We residents of the Faculty Neighborhood appreciate living close to the university and the Central Business District. But we also cherish whatever buffers exist (and those that can be added) to keep our neighborhood a defined and bounded neighborhood. Weakening and destroying natural buffers the neighborhood has from student life and the light, noise, traffic, fumes of cars goes against decades of Durham's stated long-term goals.

With Eversource trimming and pulling down trees all over town, I am really saddened that Durham would consider changing the nature of the Church Hill property for a gain of a few non-student parking spaces at the far end of the shopping district. If allowed to go through, this plan would increase both pedestrian traffic and vehicle traffic on Main Street, with entering town from Rte 108 becoming much more difficult. Moreover, one of the only saving graces of the earlier generally awful Mill Plaza plans was the claim that it would NOT increase the number of student cars downtown.

It is already frustrating to constantly have to sit in your car while a slow stream of students wanders through the crosswalks, or, as is often the case, cross out of the crosswalks. And bringing more student cars into downtown can only make our Town noisier and more crowded. If the foot and vehicle traffic increase any further, I think the business district will become a ghost town. People will do everything they can to avoid the area.

Durham has made a big push to claim that it is ahead of the typical curve on sustainability. Recently, I've seen a number of articles saying that the best hope for fighting climate change is to plant MORE trees. Destroying the last downtown forest to create parking spaces sounds like a mad plan from the 1950s. Please embrace more up-to-date thinking and protect the Church Hill forest from destruction. Thank you for your attention.