

Date: December 11, 2020
To: Planning Board, Rick Taintor
From: Diane Chen
Re: Proposed Church Hill parking lot

I appreciate your hard work and time you've expended on this project. Although downtown Durham could use more parking options, 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 entrance, leaving only a small number of net-gain spaces for others 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. 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. 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? The noise from the cars will not be baffled as Mike Sievert admitted during the sitewalk. Now the retaining wall is 25' facing the homes on Chesley Drive. This will drive the prices for these homes downward. Who wants to look out their kitchen window and see a 25' retaining wall?

As I understand it, any change in use of a parcel, can't add additional light (14-18 foot tall light poles proposed), noise (cars), dust (cars), increase in traffic (cars), and fumes (definitely cars) 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. There is a long line of cars trying to turn left at the traffic light on 108 to avoid the downtown. The majority of those cars cut through the Faculty Neighborhood. I live 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.