

To: The Durham, NH Town Planning Board
From: John Mince 23 Faculty Road, Durham, NH
Re: Proposed Parking Lot adjacent to the Mill Plaza
Date: 3/22/22

First, thank you for all the work you have all put in overseeing and considering the decisions around this project. I am opposed to the proposal for the following reasons.

The direct deterioration of the three Chesley neighbors view and environment. The lack of clear and accurate sketches of what that hill, with much fill and a retaining wall, would actually look like from the perspective of the the closest neighbors is a real problem. Accurate sketches and size ratios are necessary if we are to adhere to the idea that the building of the parking lot will not negatively effect the neighbors. As proposed: It will.

The removal of mature trees is precisely the opposite of what Durham needs. Mature trees are directly beneficial to the environment. They are cooling, they are supportive of CO2 removal. They use the CO2 for their metabolism, and release oxygen.

The asphalt parking lot is a huge heat sink. It draws heat energy into itself and slowly radiates it out into the environment. The precise opposite of what we need on an overheated planet, and an already heavily built UNH. Recall what it feels like to step barefoot onto an asphalt parking lot at the beach.

The trees are stabilizers of the topography. Healthy root systems of mature trees manage to create a genuine living structure, whereas hundred of trucks worth of fill are artificial to that structure. The difference is that the completed project will likely result in water runoff problems and flooding.

The decision to use grass instead of planting trees to stabilize the system beyond the retaining wall is most ill advised. It will not work. The slope and size of that created hill will need much more support than grass plantings. Trees and roots structures are what is needed.

Replacing the natural slope of that forest with fill and retaining wall will have effects that are not possible to accurately understand or preempt. It is now well known that worldwide human building projects such as this one produce more environmental damage than that caused by cars and trucks.

Once this is created, there is no going back. The neighbors will suffer, the environment will suffer. And this could happen in a town that normally is proud of its environmental wisdom. UNH itself has been touted as one of the most environmentally conscious universities by the periodicals that rate such variables.

There is an entire branch of environmental knowledge that is now on the upswing, and that is the Right of Nature movement. Nature in some regions is now being considered to have its own rights independent of the wants of humans. The law is actively pursuing this concept.

For these reasons and more, I oppose the building of the parking lot as proposed.

I implore you as the Town Planning Board to reject the current proposal for the parking lot adjacent to Mill Plaza.