

15 December 2021

To: The Durham Planning Board

From: Joshua Meyrowitz, 7 Chesley Drive, Durham

Re: Once again: absence of informative images from Toomerfs

Toomerfs have done it again – or rather *not* done it again.

The Toomerfs have now submitted some new “renderings” of their proposed Church Hill parking facility.<sup>1</sup> These are pretty images, and they display what would be remarkable growth in new downtown urban forests on the eastern (Urso/Hall) side, the western (Mill Plaza) side, and even the southern (Chesley Dr) side. But they remain mostly the same sort of “from-above” images that have long been the subject of sustained critique by me and others. It’s a bit of a stretch to call them 3d images, when they omit the most critical dimension from three sides – height. A great deal remains to be submitted for the Board to complete a thorough review, including what Planner Behrendt termed “indispensable information” over eight months ago ([Planner's Review 4-14-21](#)).

For more than two years, Toomerfs have ignored requests from the public and, more recently, Planner Behrendt to submit the types of renderings of the various proposed Church Hill parking mounds that would help the Planning Board more accurately assess whether the proposed parking facility (1) can indeed be fairly considered “at-grade surface parking,” (2) site-plan regulations would be met (see [Mower 9-7-21](#)), and (3) the external impacts on abutting properties and the neighborhood would not be greater than those experienced from existing and permitted uses in the zone in terms of traffic, noise,<sup>2</sup> light/glare, odors/fumes, hours of activity, as well as other factors, such as heat, flooding, and watershed pollution. (See, for example: [Joshua Meyrowitz 2-12-21](#).)

Yet, as has been highlighted at multiple Planning Board meetings (and at two ZBA hearings and then in filings for two Superior Court appeals, one of which is still [pending](#)), Toomerfs repeatedly have submitted “from-above” images that portray their proposed parking facility as a flat-as-a-pancake , surface. Those images do not reveal the height, mass, and elevation of grade – or even the angle of parked car headlights and lighting poles (are the latter even visible in the new renderings?) – from abutting properties, such as the Urso home, the Andersen home, and Chesley Drive. (A new image that may purport to show a view from Mill Plaza is unconvincing and not very revealing.)

I believe all these (quoted or adapted from Planner Behrendt reviews) are still missing:

- profile drawings (elevation) of the proposed retaining slope structures on three sides;
- “longitudinal profile from Main Street to Chesley Drive, or preferably Faculty Road, showing the continuous final ground elevation. This would help clarify how visible the vehicles and lights would be from nearby properties.”
- “An image of the subject site plan juxtaposed with the proposed Mill Plaza project.”
- “Some kind of rendering to understand how the parking lot and regrading meets the stone wall on the westerly side.”

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<sup>1</sup> Latest images are from late afternoon, Tue, Dec 14 (too late to be posted on application site day before Wed Public Hearing).

<sup>2</sup> Including these noise sources: engines, horns, alarms, music, doors slamming, snow plows, backup beepers, talking. [b]