

# **An Open Letter to the Durham Planning Board, July 7, 2022**

## ***From 63 long-term members of the Community Church of Durham***

We write as a group of long-term members of the Community Church of Durham, the entity that gives the Church Hill District its name.

We stand in strong collective opposition to the idea of destroying Church Hill Woods to put in a large commercial parking lot. Although we live in a variety of locations, we all care about what the area surrounding our church and the center of Durham look and feel, sound and smell, like.

The current proposal for Church Hill Woods does not respect the nature and purpose of the Church Hill District as it has been defined since its formation in 2006:

“The purpose of the Church Hill District is to preserve and enhance the historic character of this area by allowing for multiple land uses including professional offices, limited retail uses, and senior housing.... New development should maintain the character of the area....” – **Durham Zoning Ordinance, 175-44 (p. 72)**

“Among the five zones in the Core Commercial area, Church Hill has the most distinct character and is thus most sensitive to inappropriate development.” – **Durham Architectural Design Standards (p. 8)**

The proposed imposing and aesthetically unpleasant parking lot, which would grossly alter the natural topography of The Hill, is very much out-of-character for the Church Hill District. Indeed, it would be a prime example of “inappropriate development” for Church Hill.

Church Hill Woods is an ecologically sensitive area that is uphill from a flood zone and the terribly impaired College Brook. No engineered stormwater system can match what a forest can do over centuries. Among other parking-lot pollutants, snow-melting salt cannot be mitigated. That on its own should be enough for the project to fail Conditional Use, apart from all the other obvious negative external impacts for the surrounding environment and homes (added noise, light/glare, traffic, fumes, summer heat, hours of activity, and out-of-scale development).

Please respect our Zoning, reject the terrible parking lot idea, and limit developments on Church Hill to what is *permitted* in the zone. Something really beautiful and appropriate – and respectful of the topography and the character of the District – could be built on that property.

Thank you.

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*Regarding protecting Church Hill Woods from inappropriate development*

**Respectfully submitted by the following 63  
long-term members of the Community Church of Durham**

Ken Andersen, 16 Garden Lane, Durham, NH  
Martha Andersen, 8 Chesley Drive, Durham, NH  
Sean Ashburner, 222 Wadleigh Falls Road, Lee, NH  
Nat Balch, 20 Wiswall Road, Durham, NH  
Barbara Baldwin, 14 Stone Quarry Drive, Durham, NH  
Dwight Baldwin, 14 Stone Quarry Drive, Durham, NH  
Juddie Barrett, 11 Bagdad Rd, Durham, NH  
Heidi Bogle, 4 Croghan Lane, Durham, NH  
Scott Bogle, 4 Croghan Lane, Durham, NH  
Jon Bromley, 31 Ffrost Drive, Durham, NH  
Nancy M. Brown, 4 Fitts Farm Drive, Durham, NH  
Frederick James Bullock, 247 Dur. Pt Rd, Durham, NH  
Mark Chutter, 246 Packers Falls Road, Durham, NH  
Devin Connors, 29 Faculty Rd, Durham, NH  
Rylan Connors, 29 Faculty Rd, Durham, NH  
Thomas Crossman, 26 Coe Drive, Durham, NH  
Heather Curran, 29 Faculty Rd, Durham, NH  
Sean Curran, 29 Faculty Rd, Durham, NH  
Audrey Drogseth, 6 Bay Road #36, Newmarket, NH  
Dennis Drogseth, 6 Bay Road #36, Newmarket, NH  
David Ellis, 10 Barberry Coast Road, Newmarket, NH  
Kathryn Ellis, 26 Coe Drive, Durham, NH  
Lorna Ellis, 246 Packers Falls Road, Durham, NH  
Marion Ellis, 10 Barberry Coast Road, Newmarket, NH  
David Ervin, 26 Hayes Rd, Madbury, NH  
Ellen Ervin, 26 Hayes Rd, Madbury, NH  
Kristin Forselius, 222 Wadleigh Falls Road, Lee, NH  
Diana B. Frost, 16 Oyster River Road, Durham, NH  
Charles N.G. Gould, 3 Meader Lane, Durham, NH  
Eliga Gould, 3 Meader Lane, Durham, NH  
Richard Gsottschneider 280 Durham Pt Rd, Durham, NH  
Kathleen Gsottschneider, 280 Durham Pt Rd, Durham, NH  
Nicoletta Gullace, 3 Meader Lane, Durham, NH  
Frederick G. Hochgraf, 9 Old Landing Road, Durham, NH  
Ann Hotchkiss, 2 York Drive, Durham, NH  
Mary James, 21 Bagdad Road, Durham, NH  
Robert James, 21 Bagdad Road, Durham, NH  
Pamela Maude Langley, 247 Durham Pt Rd, Durham, NH  
Mary LaPolice, 7 Magrath Road, Durham, NH  
Troy LaPolice, 7 Magrath Road, Durham, NH  
Deborah Leavitt, 19 Rutland Street, Dover, NH  
Richard Leavitt, 19 Rutland Street, Dover, NH  
Mary Merkley, 21 Fitts Farm Dr, Durham, NH  
John Mince, 23 Faculty Road, Durham, NH  
Maggie Morrison, 20 Wiswall Road, Durham, NH  
Judith Moyer, 43B Bagdad Road, Durham, NH  
Maria Niswonger, 8 Strout Lane, Durham, NH  
Monika Parker, 17 James Farm Rd, Lee, NH  
Anita Pilar, 9 Church Hill Road, Durham, NH  
Carolyn Puffer, 1106 Mead Hill Rd, Newmarket, NH  
Mary Schwoerer, 49 Samuel Hanson Ave, Dover, NH  
Dianne Thompson, 22 Perley Lane, Durham, NH  
David Sanderson, 248 Spinney Rd, Portsmouth, NH  
Eleanore Sanderson, 248 Spinney Rd, Portsmouth, NH  
Adam Smith, 8 Burnham Ave, Durham, NH  
Henry M. Smith, 1118 Bennett Way, Newmarket, NH  
Sarah Smith, 8 Burnham Ave, Durham, NH  
Carl Spang, 55 Wiswall Road, Durham, NH  
Judith Spang, 55 Wiswall Road, Durham, NH  
Carol Tuveson, 11 Watson Road, Durham, NH  
Jane Weiland, 8 Hoitt Dr, Durham, NH  
Douglas L. Wheeler, 27 Mill Road, Durham, NH  
Katherine Wells Wheeler, 27 Mill Road, Durham, NH