

From: [Susan Richman](#)
To: [Michael Behrendt](#); [Todd Selig](#); [Karen Edwards](#); [Durham Town Council](#)
Subject: Proposed Church Hill parking mound
Date: Thursday, July 7, 2022 11:46:53 PM

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Dear Durham Planning Board,

I am writing to express my concern that the proposed parking mound on Church Hill would violate the “**preservation of natural resources**,” which is one of the considerations that must be met for Conditional Use.

“Preservation of natural resources” is more than ensuring a scenic view. It has a far more urgent meaning, as Durham strives for a sustainable future.

According to the Durham Town website:

“In January 2021, Durham made a commitment to plan for a sustainable future by joining the [Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy \(GCoM\)](#). Local governments committed to GCoM pledge to implement policies and undertake measures to reduce/limit greenhouse gas emissions, prepare for the impacts of climate change, increase access to sustainable energy, and track progress toward these objectives.”

So Durham has made a pledge to an international entity that we are committed to a sustainable future.

In 2019, a Greenhouse Gas Inventory for Durham determined that trees are responsible for the greatest reduction of our greenhouse gas emissions. “Land use removal” equaled NEGATIVE 31.2% emissions.

And therefore Durham’s Climate Action Plan, authored by Sustainability Fellow Cathy Fletcher in May 22, gives our Natural Resources Goal NR.2 as “Maintain Durham’s capability of sequestering carbon through land use practices through 2024.”

“**Preservation of natural resources**” is a central tenet of our GCoM pledge, which we promise to attain by pursuing a Climate Action Plan, which requires sequestering carbon through land use practices, such as protecting mature trees.

Cutting down the Church Hill tract of trees also will have a **fiscal impact** (another item on the Conditional Use checklist). When we fail to sequester emissions, we pay for carbon’s “externalities”: the taxes that cover disaster relief, infrastructure degradation, higher insurance costs, higher health care costs, and alterations to our roads and culverts to prepare for likely flooding. In 2019 for the United States these

externalities amounted annually to 114,000 lives lost, \$240 billion annual cost in harm to environment, property, and health costs.

As I am neither a scientist nor a lawyer, perhaps I have stated this case awkwardly. But I concur with Amy Chillag's 2019 **CNN** article, which Joshua Meyrowitz shared with you on 6/21/22, *"US cities are losing 36 million trees a year. Here's why it matters and how you can stop it."*

This article lists the urgent importance of saving trees – **preserving our natural resources** – and **the negative fiscal impact** if we fail to do so. In particular, the article cited a study by the U.S. Forest Service: "The study placed a value on tree loss based on trees' role in air pollution removal and energy conservation. The lost value amounted to \$96 million a year."

Thank you for your consideration,

Susan Richman