

14 January 2022

Dear Planning Board Members:

Reference: Church Hill parking lot proposal

I am addressing deforestation and the conditional use criteria which enable the Planning Board to consider external impacts beyond those listed.

On September 8, 2021, I read aloud the following which was later published:

<https://www.ci.durham.nh.us/fridayupdate/friday-updates-september-24-2021>

*In January [2021], Durham joined the Global Covenant of Mayors, where Durham pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, prepare for the impacts of climate change, increase access to sustainable energy, and track progress towards these objectives. Since then, Durham has been working diligently to meet the deliverables for this commitment.*

*This [past] summer, a Community-Wide Greenhouse Gas Inventory was completed through the joint efforts of UNH Sustainability Fellows Emily Mello and Cathy Fletcher. This inventory measured greenhouse gas emissions and removals occurring within Durham. Results from this inventory found that the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions came from transportation (47%) and the built environment (45%), and **the largest sources of greenhouse gas removals came from forests and reforestation (80%) and trees outside forests maintaining or gaining their canopy (20%)**. This inventory also found that carbon dioxide removals from Durham's forests and trees are equivalent to approximately 34% of Durham's emissions. This inventory will be used to develop emissions reduction targets and strategies in Durham.*

I have lived in Durham since 1974, and while Durham has long been a Tree City, it isn't enough to balance greenhouse gas emissions. Even a tiny forest such as the one being considered for parking is a valuable part of our tree canopy. Turning it into asphalt not only negates its ability to remove emissions, but creates a heat island adding to short term discomfort and long-term warming climate.

During precipitation events I am concerned that salt and other chemicals from vehicles will flow downhill killing the required buffer over time; eventually pollutants would end up in the brook the quality of which we are supposed to protect.

Please deny this proposal. It is not a good solution to parking needs. The current best use for this forested land is what it now does – serving as a buffer for greenhouse gas emissions and helping to keep the center of Durham cooler and healthier.

Thank you,  
Suzy Loder  
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