

June 09, 2025

Re: Lodging House

Dear Members of the Durham Planning Board:

I understand why it makes sense to remove the new Student Rental definition due to emerging regulations from the State. I do not understand why we are replacing Student Rental with Lodging House in our Table of Uses—two entirely different uses.

Concerns about Lodging Houses

As I read through the definition of Lodging House, I note that it *does not require owner occupancy and could have up to 16 temporary or permanent residents*.

I am not sure why we are choosing to add this use to our Table of Uses, given Durham's history trying to manage large groups of renters and their guests. Particularly for those relatively new to the Planning Board or the community, please note that for decades the town worked hard to manage the number of unrelated tenants living together off-campus in family neighborhoods because of incompatible lifestyles and behaviors. Now with the proposed definition of Lodging House, potentially there could be as many as 16 tenants with no supervision. Does this really make sense for Durham?

I can't help but think of an experience I had years ago renting a room in a UNH fraternity house during the summer months while I attended UNH summer school. Perhaps because it was a summer rental, there was no designated person "in charge." From that experience, I can assure you that these sorts of rental arrangements (i.e. large number of temporary unsupervised tenants) do not lead to orderly, resident-friendly living. Without going into detail, I can tell you that the kitchen was so disgusting that I refused to step foot in it, and the bathroom was not much better. Behavior of the residents was out of control and led to some very unfortunate, life-altering incidents.

Permitted LOCATION of Lodging Houses re: lifestyle conflicts

I see that you are wisely choosing not to permit Lodging Houses in RA and RB—an acknowledgment, I assume, of possible conflict in lifestyles between those living in family neighborhoods and residents in Lodging Houses.

However, I am not sure why you are choosing to permit Lodging Houses in our two other residential neighborhoods: R and RC. For those who do not live in the Rural zone, the name Rural no doubt brings up visions of houses surrounded by large tracts of land. Even our 3.3 acre zoning requirement in R and RC suggests this. However, as a resident of the Rural zone, I want to correct any misunderstanding.

Please compare the attached layouts of neighborhoods in the R and RB (not a typo) as shown on our tax maps. You can see that the *actual acreage* of residential lots in many R and RB is not that different. In many cases the lots in R zones, while slightly larger, also tend to be longer, narrower lots. Thus, many of the homes in the R zone are closer together than homes in RB, where Lodging Houses are *not* permitted. Based on these facts, I do not believe it is appropriate to allow Lodging Houses in any of our residential zones (RA, RB, RC and R).

Locations that align with our Master Plan vs. those that don't

In addition to concerns about conflicting lifestyles, how does it make sense to allow dense housing at the far reaches of town where transportation becomes an issue? Lodging House residents living in R and RC will need cars. That's practically a given. Our Master Plan recommends keeping density closer to the downtown to cut down on emissions and transportation issues. Why, then, are we now proposing to permit Lodging Houses in R and RC? What impact will this have on already-challenging parking conditions for both the town—and perhaps on UNH? What would the Energy Committee have to say about this proposal?

What makes more sense

If the Town decides to move forward with allowing Lodging Houses, I suggest they be permitted only in the commercial zones you have noted: PO, CH, C—all of which are within walking distance to our downtown and the university.

I urge members of the Planning Board to rethink this proposal. Should you decide that Lodging Houses are a critical addition to our housing options, they should be permitted only in our commercial zones, either walking distance to downtown and the University or on existing transportation routes, such as in ORLI.

Sincerely,

Beth Olshansky

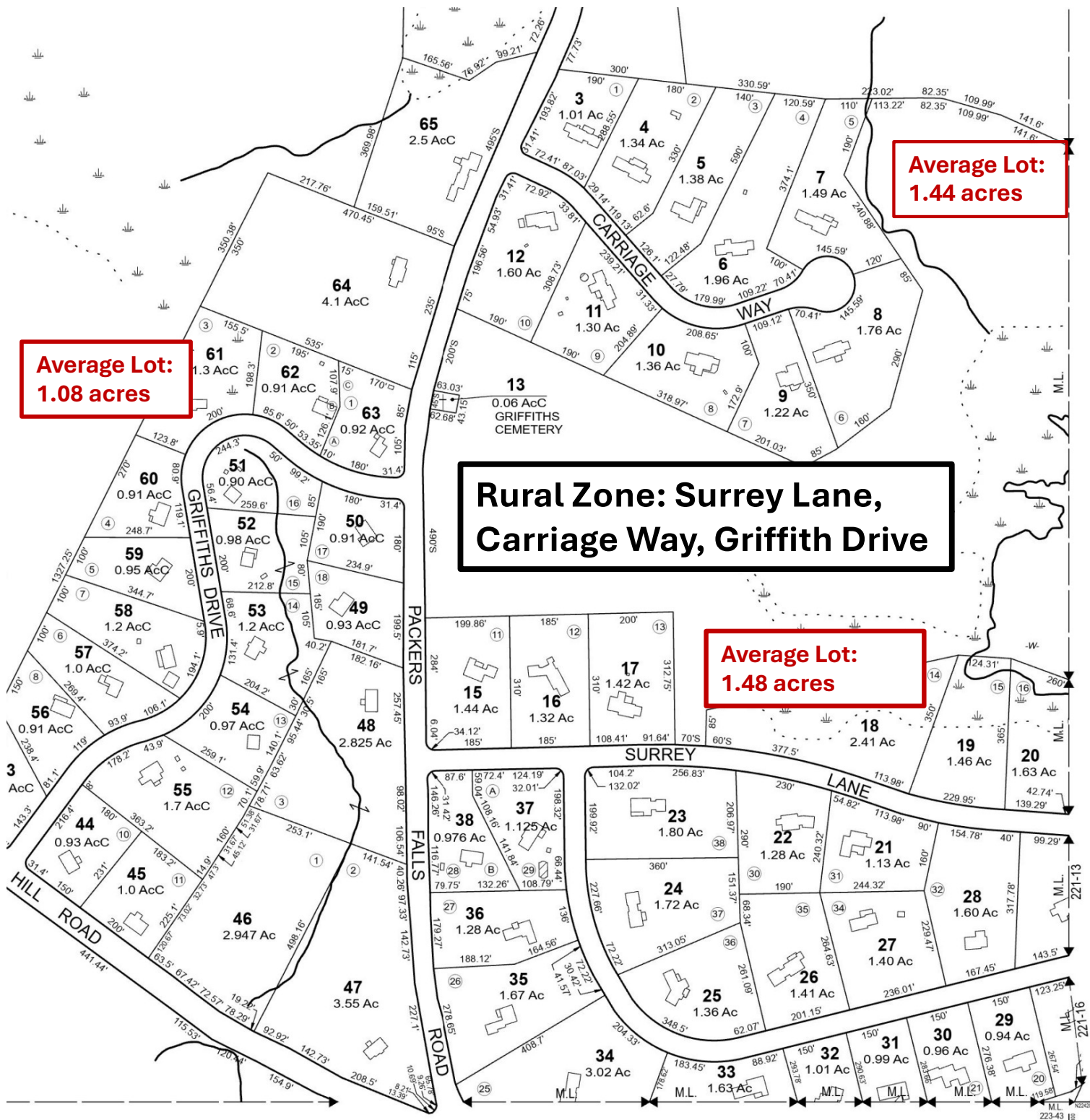
122 Packers Falls Road

Durham

PS Please see attached maps.

RB Zone: Hemlock, Woodridge, Moharimet Way, Bartlett, Meserve





Rural Zone: Falls Way, Stonewall Way

