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To the Durham Planning Board
January 9, 2019
Public Hearing: 18 Main Street, Conditional Use Parking Lot

I am here tonight to speak in opposition to approval of the Conditional Use application for a parking lot at 18 Main Street.

Vehicular access is not adequate as required by Zoning Ordinance **Section 175-23 C.1**. Traffic is frequently backed-up from the traffic lights by the Brick Town Hall and from the stop sign by the post office. Cars often turn around in the entrances to the Community Church and Park Court. The proposed rule of 'No Left Turn' into an 18 Main Street parking lot is necessary because vehicular access to this site is not adequate. The traffic congestion on Main Street at Church Hill should not be increased by the proposed parking lot.

Environmental constraints listed in **Section 175-23 C.1** exist at the site in the form of shallow soil to bedrock, exposed bedrock, and the steep slope used for access. If ledge removal is necessary to install an adequate gravel base for the asphalt, hammering or blasting will damage the plaster and historic houses at 18 and 20 Main Street and the stained glass of St. George's church. The steep slope at the widened access driveway may interfere with the required site triangles and mandate removal of historic granite stonework flanking the pedestrian entrance to the front door of 18 Main Street

External impacts in excess of the existing use, enumerated in **Section 175-23 C.2** will occur if the Conditional Use application is approved. Increased traffic, noise, odors, vibrations, dust, fumes, hours of operation, and exterior lighting and glare. The number of vehicles will triple, increasing noise, odors, vibrations, dust and fumes. The hours of operation will increase because the number of drivers and passengers will triple. Exterior lighting on 5 poles of 15 to 16 feet in height will shine light where no parking lot lights currently exist. All these effects are new, negative external impacts on the residential neighborhood of Church Hill.

The proposed layout and design of the parking lot is incompatible with the neighborhood and is prohibited by **Section 175-23 C.3**. The proposed commercial parking lot is in a residential neighborhood adjacent to a church. The increased vehicular and pedestrian traffic, noise, 24-hour lights, dust, fumes and asphalt is incompatible with the established character of the neighborhood of Church Hill.

The paving-over of grass, bushes and trees will result in the loss of the existing green buffer in a residential neighborhood. The setback on the east and west lot lines is only 5 feet. This is not enough to ensure the survival of the large trees planted along the boundaries. What is now a residential neighborhood greenspace viewed and enjoyed by all will become an asphalt wasteland. The trees will die due to salt and root compaction. The proposed landscaping is totally inadequate, with ~~out~~ nothing to replace the greenery (shown by faint lines under the pavement on site plan pages C-1 and C-2). This greenery surrounds the grass on three sides. Only 3 evergreen bushes are proposed, to be planted along the north boundary.

Section 175-23 C.4 requires that modification of existing structures shall not be incompatible with the established character of the neighborhood. The north and west boundaries of the lot are marked by ancient stone walls which are protected by NH statute and should not be removed. The granite retaining wall along the sidewalk in front of 18 Main Street is to be removed and rebuilt to hold back the excavated lawn due to the widening of the access into the proposed parking lot. Both these alterations are not in keeping with the established character of the Church Hill neighborhood which is part of the Durham Historic District.

Section 175-23 C.5 requires preservation of identified natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources on the site, including stonewalls, mature tree lines, designated historic buildings and the viewsheds. The proposed parking lot can never be adequately screened because the setback is only 5 feet from the east and west lot lines and the 5 foot space is too narrow to plant effective landscape screening. The parking lot will be visible from Cowell Drive, the post office, on both sides of the 18 Main Street house, and from Park Court. The addition of a commercial parking lot is not compatible and does not preserve the integrity of the Historic District, which is listed on the National Register. The proposed parking lot will not preserve the identified natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources that now exist. The removal of historic stone wall boundaries and the death of mature tree lines does not preserve the cultural, historic and scenic resources at 18 Main Street, in the Church Hill neighborhood or in the Durham Historic District.

A commercial parking lot will reduce the value of surrounding residential property because it will be visible and it is a commercial use in a residential neighborhood. Such an impact violates **Section 175-23 C.6**.