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Zoning Board of Adjustment
c/o Karen Edwards, Administrative Assistant
8 Newmarket Rd, Durham, NH 03824
kedwards@ci.durham.nh.ud

Re: Citizen letter concerning the petition submitted by Young Drive LLC, Seabrook, New Hampshire, for an Application for Variances.

March 20, 2017

Dear Mr. Starkey and Zoning Board Members:

This letter is written in strong support of the Zonal Administrator's **Letter of Denial for Young Drive**, LLC c/o Francis Chase on Feb 28, 2017 and against the requested variances. Allowing the variances for the new multi-unit Elderly Housing Development on Young Drive would result in:

- 1) Diminished desirability of single family homes in the surrounding neighborhood. This development would **decrease current property values** on Beards Creek, Coe Drive, Woodman, and Bay View -- potentially shifting many of them from single-family homes to student rented housing.
- 2) Damage to the public interest because of **conflict to the spirit and intention of the original zoning regulations**. These zoning regulations are necessary to retain the character of Durham as a small town striving to preserve its natural resources and serving as a model community for a sustainability.
- 3) **Cause harm to evolving and fragile wetlands**, impacting the health of the surrounding ecosystems of Beards Creek, Oyster River, and Little Bay, along with harm to the associated economic stability and opportunity for the town of Durham.

Following are our main concerns:

A) **The zoning height must remain below 30 feet**. It is necessary to strongly enforce the zoning regulation of 30 ft height adjacent to ponds, lakes, and waterways if Durham wishes to maintain its unique character as a small town striving to preserve its natural resources and serving as a model community for sustainability.

It is important to consider the plans for this proposed multi-unit Elderly Housing Development from the water in the absence of the existing tall white pines. These white pines are mature and will reach the end of their life cycle in coming decades. The plans presented as viewed from the water disguise the impact of the proposed 4-story height of the buildings by drawing tall white pines in front of the buildings. As homeowners in the area, we are well aware of the difficulty maintaining these white pine groves. Selectively thinning a dense narrow strip of white pine is usually not possible without weakening the entire grove. Construction will likely also stress the root systems of the white pine groves, increasing pest damage and causing trees to fall during gust fronts and storms, a safety risk to both residents of the Elderly Housing Development as well as to the adjacent family neighborhoods.

Given a future where the tall white pines will no longer shield the view of the three large main buildings from the water, the character of the neighborhoods surrounding Beards Creek will inevitably become more urban, undeniably exacerbated by the requested 4-story height of construction. While the residents of this new Senior Housing construction will have a beautiful view of the water and forests, the residents of Beards Landing, Coe Drive, Woodman, and Bay View will lose their view of the forest, replaced by the sight of a three large four-story complexes and the daily activities of the residents within. The desirability of homes in this neighborhood will diminish, decreasing property values and encouraging properties to convert to student rentals, changing the character of the neighborhoods surrounding Beards Creek. Maintaining strong communities of families living within the center of Durham is critical for balancing student life.

B) It is crucial to maintain the wetland buffer of at least 75 feet for this property. The primary problem with this proposed construction is that too many occupants will live on land that is essentially meant to be wetlands. Wetlands evolve over time. As the climate changes, persistent weather patterns are projected to lead to larger precipitation events and flood levels will continue to rise. Climate change is already resulting in sea level rise, increasing tidal flow, expanding wetlands along the coast. The 100-year FEMA floodplain maps and wetland boundaries of today will change dramatically in coming years. The main buildings of the Elderly Housing Development appear to be at a reasonable distance from the wetlands. However, within decades, the townhouses, clubhouse, and the entrance road will experience substantial periodic flooding. The town will be spending a lot of money cleaning up damage to the adjacent waterways and infrastructure from this flooded property -- not to mention the loss to the resale value of the property itself.

With a future of increased flooding combined with sea level rise and tidal influences, it is critical for the Town of Durham to maintain the wetland zoning of at least 75 feet for this property, with the knowledge that this buffer strip will become narrower in coming decades as the wetlands naturally increase. The town should continue to use updated regional climate projections to expand its buffer zones in

order to prepare for the future, avoiding large expensive cleanups and property damage.

3) While the zoning variance for the placement of parking spaces facing the street appears reasonable, **the number of parking spaces will need to be seriously considered** because of pollution runoff. The main concern is pollution into storm sewers, wetlands, Oyster River, and eventually Little Bay. It is important to continue to improve the health of Little Bay, especially given the new economic opportunities to Durham such as Oyster fisheries.

The concerns detailed here relate to the maintenance of wetlands that feed into the Oyster River and Great Bay watershed and affect the communities outside of Durham. It is important that the public is aware of the potential impacts of the variances considered by the Durham Zoning Board, which must act in accordance with laws at the state and federal level, protecting fragile coastlines and water bodies important for both public health and the livelihoods of those in surrounding communities.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Katharine Duderstadt & Nathan Schwadron
7 Beards Landing, Durham, NH