

16 Bayview Road
Durham, NH 03824
March 20, 2017

Dear Members of the Zoning Board,

Please accept the following comments for the March 21, 2017 public hearing regarding the requests for variances by the owners of the Young Drive property. I am opposed to the Zoning Board granting a variance for building height and parking and will summarize my main concerns about the proposed re-development of Young Drive.

I am a resident of 16 Bayview Road, which directly abuts the proposed re-development on Young Drive, and the view out the back of my home will look directly onto the new parking lots and the proposed buildings, which are institutional in character and not in keeping with the rural character of our residential neighborhood.

Potential Decrease in Property Values

I am opposed to granting a variance related to the height of the new buildings. The proposed buildings are massive and are not in line with the scale nor the character of the surrounding neighborhoods of Bayview Road and Beard's Landing. The views from both these neighborhoods will be forever ruined and the rural character of the directly abutting communities will be diminished, with a likely decrease in property values as the rural view is obliterated by the proposed four story buildings and parking lots. The size and scale of the buildings are too large for the site and will forever change the aesthetics and the rural nature of the neighborhoods in which we have chosen to live. A senior housing or other proposal that works within the current ordinances and is sensitive to the character of the existing neighborhoods is welcomed.

Owing to the special conditions of the property that distinguish it from other properties in the area, denial of the Variance would result in unnecessary hardship because no fair and substantial relationship exists between the general public purpose of the ordinance provision and the specific application of that provision to the property.

There is no evidence that denial of the variance would result in unnecessary hardship on the part of the developer. It seems that the motive for profit drives the "need" for the variance related to the height of the buildings and the amount of space needed for parking. The developer states in their application that "Granting the variance would in effect allow for a positive outcome that is more beneficial to the Durham community than would denial of the request". They also state that their request for a "minimal height allowance" will "enable an Elderly Housing complex to be built in the area which... benefits the neighborhood". Who better to decide what benefits the neighborhood than the people residing in the neighborhood? Most, if not all the abutters to Young Drive oppose the variance related to the height of the buildings, and I do not agree with the developer's statement that the proposed variance for height of the buildings "would not create an abnormal structure within the area and would be in keeping with the community atmosphere".

Owing to special conditions of the property that distinguishes it from other properties in the area, the property cannot be reasonably used in strict conformance with the ordinance, and a variance is therefore necessary to enable a reasonable use of it.

There are no special conditions of the property that would preclude the developer from creating a proposal that is in conformance with the ordinances related to height and parking. Many other senior housing developments in Durham have remained consistent with the scale and character of abutting neighborhoods and have respected and maintained the rural quality of Durham.

Related to the parking variance, the developer states that "The general public will not be able to see the parking areas from the public way that exists after project completion." However, they do not consider the impact of the visibility of the parking areas on the direct abutters on Bayview Road, whose view will change from wooded green space interspersed with several duplexes to several massive buildings with parking lots in front of them. While I understand that the developer is unable to position the parking lots behind the buildings due to the location of the Creek, I would recommend that they decrease the scale of their proposal and thus reduce the amount of land that needs to be paved over in order to provide visitor parking.

In summary, while I am in favor of the idea of a senior housing development on Young Drive, the current proposal would have too many deleterious effects upon the rural nature and character of this beautiful area of our town. I am concerned about preserving the rural quality of this gateway to Durham and of the abutting neighborhoods. Right now Young Drive has beautiful scenic views of Beards' Creek and the woods surrounding it. The area provides habitat for wildlife as well as a peaceful visual environment for people living in and visiting the area. I encourage the developers to work within the existing parameters set by the town in order to keep any development consistent with the vision that we hold for Durham. Thank you for our time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Jody Ransom
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Durham, NH