

August 26, 2023

To: Members of the Durham City Council and Durham County Commission

From: Robert G. Healy and Charles Welch, Co-Chairs, New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee

Re: Amendment of Durham Comprehensive Plan for Arrowhead Neighborhood

Dear Council and Commission Members:

We are writing at the direction of the New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee (NHCCAC) pursuant to a resolution unanimously passed on August 24, 2023.

The NHCCAC was created by the City of Durham, Durham County, Orange County and the Town of Chapel Hill to advise local decision makers on implementation of the 1992 New Hope Corridor Plan. You can find a record of our activities and a copy of the New Hope Plan at our website [www.newhopecreek.org](http://www.newhopecreek.org). As you can see, the Arrowhead Neighborhood is within the area covered by the Plan (Section 8). This is the area drained by Mud Creek, which enters New Hope Creek near 15-501.

Based on the directions of the New Hope Plan, as well as recent information from the New Hope Watershed Study and the Eno-New Hope wildlife corridor study, we believe that the proposed change to the Durham Comprehensive Plan to change a large area to the mixed use category is a very bad idea. We offer the following comments:

-- Despite its name, Mud Creek has high quality water, and contains endangered invertebrates (mussels). The current low density residential development in the Arrowhead Neighborhood and surrounding area means that impacts to the creek from impervious surfaces is minimal. A mixed use plan designation would allow large structures and parking lots that would produce major new pollution sources for the Creek.

--The Arrowhead area includes or is very close to major units of Duke Forest. Intense development could interfere with normal forest management, including timber harvest and controlled burning, as well as forest manipulation for research purposes, the fundamental purpose of Duke Forest.

--The Arrowhead area has limited infrastructure, notably roads and school capacity. We have long been concerned about how traffic between Chapel Hill and Duke and for Duke School for Children and Forest View Elementary has put great pressure on Erwin Road. At some point additional high density development would force a widening of Erwin, to the detriment of both New Hope Creek and Duke Forest. The same might be true of Cornwallis Road, currently a two lane road that is often heavily traveled.

--The New Hope Plan pays special attention to the natural, visual and recreational value of the corner of Erwin Road and Cornwallis Road. The proposed change in the plan designation would directly or

indirectly bring new development to this area. The Eno-New Hope wildlife corridor plan recognizes the importance of Duke Forest and other large tracts in this area. Low density rural development, its current use, has only a moderate impact on corridor functions. A mixed use designation, which would allow high rise residential buildings and commercial facilities of all types (including gasoline stations) would greatly interfere with corridor functions valuable to animals of all types, including birds, insects and invertebrates.

In closing we want to emphasize that the New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee has never reacted negatively to high density commercial and residential development within the Corridor, provided it was near existing built up areas and transportation corridors and did not unduly burden roads, water and sewer, schools and other infrastructure.. We supported large apartment developments on Garrett Road and Mount Moriah Road that were near 15-501. We supported several residential and commercial developments between Garrett and Old Chapel Hill Road. We also testified in favor of early Patterson place developments, and supported the recent Patterson Place Mixed Use Plan. We did not oppose clustered single family developments along Randolph Road and Pickett Road. We are acutely aware of Durham's need for affordable housing and tax-paying commercial development. However, we believe that the Arrowhead mixed use proposal puts high density in the wrong place. There are many other areas (near old South Square, for example) that are far better suited to this kind of land use.