

## Testimony of Robert G. Healy before Durham Planning Commission

### Re. Patterson Place Compact Neighborhood Plan, April 9, 2019

Good evening. My name is Bob Healy. I am here tonight as co-chair of the New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee. The Committee has spent the last 27 years advising the local governments in Durham and Orange Counties on implementation of the 1992 New Hope Creek Corridor Plan. Over this time, close to \$5 million in federal, state, local and private funds have been expended protecting the integrity of the corridor for both natural values and public recreation.

In my testimony before you on February 12, I made note of the fact that six very experienced ecologists and environmental planners with whom we consulted **recommended a Transitional Use Area of at least 300 feet, measured from the corridor boundary, be established. This, I must emphasize, would not be a 300 foot setback or no build zone nor a limitation on zoned density.** Rather it would be a zone where a special use permit would be required that would have City Council decide whether a given configuration of development would be consistent with the New Hope Corridor Plan.

The recommendation from staff that has been sent to you calls for a TUA of only 200 feet. This would simply not cover enough of the property to see that New Hope corridor values are given adequate scrutiny. We cannot support it.

We all know that since our last meeting, the LRT has changed completely, both with respect to the nature of the project and its tight planning deadlines. We don't know what might take its place along 15-501. Patterson Place will still be a density node, but we are no longer in a rush for a blanket rezoning. **We therefore suggest that the entire property bordering the New Hope on the north side of the highway be removed from the Compact Neighborhood.**

We are very aware that the current landowner can use existing zoning to build strip commercial on the property. We are also aware that he has a grading permit that would allow virtual destruction of some of the most important slopes. We suspect that current zoning is not the most profitable use of this property, nor indeed the type of development most consistent with the public interest. We also think that exercise of the grading permit, for its own sake, would cause an enormous public outcry. At this point, rather than including the property in a blanket upzoning, with no real protection for the corridor, we think it best for the owner, should he wish to do so, to come to Planning Commission and Council for an ordinary rezoning. At that time there would be an opportunity for you and for Council to look at a specific development plan and determine whether use, density, and the configuration of development is consistent with the New Hope Corridor Plan and other matters of public interest.

Thank you for the opportunity to express these views this evening.