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ALDRSGATE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

"The Church of the Warm Heart"

ATTACHMENT 4

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632 Laurel Hill Road
at the 15-501 ByPass
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

June 30, 2006

COPY

Mr. Cal Horton
Chapel Hill Town Manager
405 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514-5705

Re: Notice of Plan Review by the Community Design Commission and the
Town Council; St. Thomas More Church (File No. 7.73..5)

Dear Mr. Horton:

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of Aldersgate United Methodist Church (Aldersgate), I write to express our deep concerns about the safety consequences and other repercussions of the above referenced project.

Our primary concerns fall into three categories: 1) the traffic bottlenecks and dangers for Laurel Hill Road neighbors and Aldersgate members as they attempt to access or exit U.S. 15-501 through a very odd four-lane-by-two-lane-by-four-lane double-intersection that will be created immediately in front of our church property; 2) the dangers to Aldersgate members and visitors and to our preschool's families and students that will be posed by motorists cutting through our parking lot to minimize the inconveniences caused by this odd double-intersection; and 3) the very obvious fact that Aldersgate's one-lane driveway and overflow parking area are slated to become the four lane thoroughfare that is the centerpiece of this proposal.

The Aldersgate driveway will become four-lanes, with three lanes serving traffic that is attempting to exit the St. Thomas More property onto U.S. 15-501 and one lane giving access to that property. As these four lanes cross Carmichael Street, they will form a major intersection that is barely a car-length from another major intersection that is governed by the U.S. 15-501/Mason Farm Road traffic signal. The St. Thomas More community and its consultants have never explained how this will not pose hazards and bottlenecks for motorists exiting U.S. 15-501 from the north and heading up Laurel Hill Road. Those motorists will have to contend with three lanes of cross-traffic exiting the St. Thomas More property as they negotiate this odd double-intersection. Moreover, Laurel Hill Road motorists wishing to head north on 15-501 will have to deal with this same phenomenon in order to get into the left turn lanes and enter the highway. Our church members and the families who use the Family Pre-School will have similar

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problems as they leave the Aldersgate parking lot, head down the short hill to the double-intersection and attempt to access 15-501 North. When St. Thomas More traffic is heavy on school days or on Sunday mornings, they will have to fight their way into left-turn lanes over a short segment of what, for almost 50 years, had been the Aldersgate driveway.

At meetings with St. Thomas More officials over this matter, Aldersgate officials expressed concern over these bottleneck and safety hazard issues. They also voiced deep concern over the prospect that Laurel Hill Road motorists, in an effort to avoid or minimize these bottleneck and access problems, would cut through Aldersgate's parking lot – in both directions. At those same meetings, many of our Laurel Hills neighbors stated that they would do exactly that. In addition, there is the high likelihood that motorists wishing to depart from the St. Thomas More property and head up Laurel Hill Road will cut through the Aldersgate parking lot in the opposite direction rather than contend with the aforementioned double-intersection at the bottom of the hill.

St. Thomas More officials and their consultants indicate that the remedy for this situation is to place a sign warning people not to cut through our parking lot. This is not acceptable. Aldersgate's gravel driveway, slated to become the four-lane thoroughfare into and out of the St. Thomas More campus, presently is a one-way lane through which people exit our property. It already has multiple signs warning motorists not to go up it. For whatever reason, there are a few motorists who now come up the driveway and through our narrow parking lot despite the signs and the oncoming traffic. Being lost, rather than deliberately avoiding a problematic traffic situation, appears to be their reason for coming up our driveway. Anything that puts our members and the preschool students at risk of cut-through motorists seeking to avoid the proposed double-intersection is highly disturbing to us. The promise to post a sign does not give us much comfort.

In addition to not taking into account Aldersgate's concerns about the problems and hazards discussed above, the planners of this project appear to have ignored the very obvious fact that Aldersgate has openly and exclusively possessed, used and maintained for almost 50 years the driveway and overflow parking area that is at the heart of this proposal. We have regularly graded and regraded that parcel, kept the ditches clear, cut the grass along it and on the open area above it, placed basketball goals and volleyball nets in the open area in years past, parked in that open area and even now store a mound of dirt there. At the very least, we would have expected more attention to Aldersgate's interests and serious concerns about a proposal that would have such a major impact upon its members and the piece of property in question. We are willing to work with the St. Thomas More community to resolve all issues associated with this matter. The first step in resolving those issues is to listen to us and take our concerns seriously.

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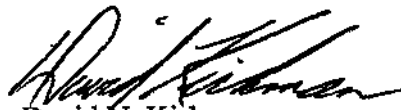
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We have suggested that the St. Thomas More community make the southern end of its property an ingress-only corridor, have traffic exit their property farther north, and not disturb our driveway. This would alleviate most of the problems associated the troublesome double-intersection configuration, as none of the other traffic turning onto or off of 15-501 would need to cross the path of St. Thomas More traffic on Carmichael Street.

Thank you for considering our concerns. We urge you to reject the double intersection aspect of our neighbor's proposal. As to the many other aspects of the St. Thomas More proposal, we support them. We are happy that the rapid growth of the St. Thomas More community enables it to implement so many exciting new projects on its property.

With kindest regards, I am

Very truly yours,



David N. Kirkman
For the Trustees of
Aldersgate United Methodist Church

cc: Chapel Hill Town Council Members

Chair, Community Design Commission

Mr. Carlos Lima
Parish Administrator
St. Thomas More Community