

Mike Taylor  
 Town of Chapel Hill  
 306 N Columbia Street  
 Chapel Hill, N.C., 27516

Sept 19, 2004

Sir:

I have lived at 1021 Laurel Hill Road since 1952 - the first occupant of a house in this neighborhood.

For those of us who live on this section of Laurel Hill, the closing of the section that runs through the Botanical Garden would be a disaster.

In bad weather for those of us whose driveways open onto the road there would be no way to exit our homes - we could not make that turn onto Coker Road we could not go up the Hill to Kings Mill and exit via that street.

Years ago the Garden requested that this section of the street be closed - Wicly the Council denied this request. At that time it was pointed out that the road was paved because it was a school bus route. I have noticed that even today the school buses go straight down the Hill in bad weather there being no dangers at those turns.

Have you come out to look at that

intersection to see the difficulties that  
making the turn into Cedar Lane for those  
of us who use Laurel Hill as our exit?  
The present road slants at that turn &  
there is a steep drop off on the right  
hand side of Cedar Drive into which one  
could easily slide when turning.  
The expense of redesigning this corner  
would be mind boggling and the  
Garden has no funds to help finance  
this. The offer of a paved lot at Fordham  
and Morning is not needed. There  
are never more than 2 or 3 cars at any  
one time (more often just one). This is  
a neighborhood, not a busy city street  
and there is ample room to make a right  
hand turn when another car is waiting to  
cross the highway or turn left.

There has never been an accident  
to visitors to the Garden on this section  
of Laurel Hill to my knowledge and how  
that it is only one way it is true that  
anyone other than neighbors use it. We  
are all fully aware of pedestrians at  
the Garden entrances. There should be no  
danger from keeping the street open.  
And the Garden has always felt free to close  
the road on their own initiative when they  
have had events there.

I am vehemently opposed to the  
closing of this section of Laurel Hill Road  
and I hope you will recommend  
against it. I will be out of the country at  
the time of the hearing or I would be there.  
Mr. David (Payler) Bennett

To: Chapel Hill Town Council  
From: GW Houston  
Date: 18 October 2004  
Subject: Closing of Laurel Hill Road at Coker Road

In order to prevent the closure of this neighborhood road, the following information will delineate the hardships and stresses such an action of this magnitude will affect. It is clear that these points be added to this process to demonstrate these impacts.

A. Freedom/Safety of movement. During the course of a typical weekday, this artery of approximately 0.2 miles provides safe and ready access for members of the Morgan Creek subdivision, easier departure route for contractors and a more direct lane for visitors and guests. Utilizing this direct connector to Fordham Blvd from Morgan Creek subdivision, motorists avoid having to "double back" towards other less safe, less direct, and higher traffic counts at the intersections of Manning Drive, Kings Mill Road, Oteys Drive and Morgan Creek Road. All four of these other intersections provide increased risk of motor vehicle mishap because motorists departing from the Morgan Creek neighborhood encounter traffic traveling on Fordham Blvd which very frequently greatly exceeds the posted speed limit of 45 mph. Also, each of the other intersections with Fordham Blvd provide much more of a decrease in line of sight visibility for both departing traffic from Morgan Creek neighborhood as well as the large volume of traffic traversing Fordham Blvd. In addition, if Laurel Hill Road is closed to neighborhood traffic, all four of the other intersections force Morgan Creek neighborhood vehicles to use intersections with worst logistical layouts: Manning Drive intersection, even with a regulatory traffic light, is situated with a steep upgrade which is difficult for drivers, especially the older driver, to maintain steady control while entering Fordham Blvd; Kings Mill Road is even riskier with its connection with Fordham Blvd because of no traffic light to regulate oncoming traffic not only from northbound lanes, but also the continuous U-turn traffic emptying from the opposite intersection of Old Mason Farm Road into Fordham Blvd which the vast majority of it has drivers using the median break to U-turn at Kings Mill Road; Morgan Creek subdivision motorists leaving by way of Oteys Drive encounter Fordham Blvd northbound traffic accelerating up a steep grade with a shrouded Oteys Drive at its zenith; the Morgan Creek/Fordham Blvd intersection is the farthest point from the Laurel Hill Road intersection, but still the merging traffic from US 15-501 North with accelerating traffic on Fordham Blvd coming from points south of the US 15-501 bridge greatly reduce safety and freedom of movement factors.

B. Accessibility of area. The 0.2 mile of Laurel Hill Road provide valuable access for daily vehicles such as several school buses which find ease of leaving the Morgan Creek subdivision greatly enhanced by the use of this stretch of roadway. Also, emergency vehicles such as ambulances, fire engines and police cruisers service to the Morgan Creek neighborhood would be significantly impeded by removing this short length to and from Fordham Blvd. Other utilities would lose an invaluable access to the Morgan Creek neighborhood, especially during and after the increasing periods of hazardous, inclement weather. One less route into such a heavily wooded area which has been severely impacted by hurricanes, snow and ice storms is not beneficial to the residents, guests and contractors of the Morgan Creek subdivision.

C. Grandfathered rights. Since the Morgan Creek neighborhood was established some 10 to 15 years before the Botanical Gardens opened its gates, we have traditional rights to having this roadway for ongoing neighborhood prerogatives as the right of usage.

In closing, no one wants any harm to come to the visitors of the Botanical Gardens. I end this submission with a list of methods to regulate traffic flow on Laurel Hill Road at the Botanical Gardens

and remain open the road for Morgan Creek neighborhood residents, guests and contractors:

1. Speedhumps at the two crosswalks nearer the main entrance of the Botanical Gardens with the top of each hump comprising a raised crosswalk area;
2. Flashing yellow caution lights to indicate nearby crosswalks;
3. Slightly widen road surface with brightly painted or decaled stripping;
4. Increased street lights by number of locations, higher wattage bulbs and clear sight lines;
5. Permanent crowd control barriers to keep pedestrians off the road shoulders and direct them safely to the reengineered crosswalks.

From: Betsy Malpass [mailto:betsymalpass@juno.com]  
Sent: Monday, October 18, 2004 1:58 PM  
To: Cal Horton; Kevin Foy; sally@ibiblio.org  
Subject: Town Council Meeting Oct 18, 2004 - NCBG Request to Close Laurel Hill Road

Mr. Horton:

Please also pass this citizen comment to all members of the Town Council. I plan to read it at tonight's Council Meeting. Also please note that Woodbine Drive is not labeled on the map in front of the Council. Thank you.

At the outset, let me say that I am a supporter of UNC and of the N.C. Botanical Garden. I'm especially excited about plans for the new Education Center at the Garden, because I understand it will be an earth friendly building incorporating many environmentally sustainable energy features that may serve as a model for future construction in our community. Our house, at 908 Woodbine Drive, is two doors from the Manning Drive border of the Garden and we value the Garden as our close neighbor. However, as the saying goes, "Business is business," and I'm here to voice my reservations about the proposed closing of Laurel Hill Road for the Council's consideration. My concerns center around vehicle access and exacerbation of existing traffic issues.

1. Closing Laurel Hill road is not essential to the Garden's plan for the new building, 52 new parking places, and the new 16-space parking lot, which are all to be constructed on one side of Laurel Hill Road with access from Old Mason Farm Road. And I understand the Garden has acknowledged this.
2. Neighbors who live up the hill from the Garden on Laurel Hill and Kings Mill Roads are denied direct access in and out of the neighborhood on this existing city street. School buses and emergency vehicles would also be denied a direct route to those neighbors.
3. Closing Laurel Hill Road as proposed by the Garden, would mean that all the employees, volunteers, and service vehicles which now use the parking lot on Laurel Hill, could only enter and leave the Garden by using Coker Drive as well as a second neighborhood street such as Manning, Kings Mill, Otey, or Morgan Creek. This puts more traffic through our neighborhood and through those points where neighborhood streets connect to Fordham Boulevard. And as the Garden grows, so does this load.
4. Traffic is already coming to a standstill on Fordham Blvd. workday mornings in front of our neighborhood. When the light at Manning finally turns green, the northbound traffic is backed up so far, that the intersection cannot clear. This did not happen before the traffic light was added at Old Mason Farm Road. When the four lanes of 15-501 coming up from Pittsboro is opened the problem will be further exacerbated. And the opening next year of 398 units of UNC Student Family Housing on Mason Farm Road across Fordham Blvd. will add to the problem. Drivers already become impatient and seek to avoid the backup by travelling through our neighborhood. Closing an intersection to the Garden puts more pressure

on the remaining intersections.

5. Alternatives to closing Laurel Hill have been mentioned, but apparently not considered by the Garden. These include, for example, gates that could be closed to traffic during the hours the Garden is open. This would leave the street open at other times for employees, service vehicles, and public use; and the gates could be opened in case of fire or other emergency.

6. If Laurel Hill is closed, one of the traffic mitigation measures required is adding a turning lane to Manning Drive at Fordham northbound. This additional opening would allow even more noise and pollution into our neighborhood. Therefore, whether or not Laurel Hill Road is closed I request that the Town work with appropriate agencies of the State to get the sound wall in front of the Garden extended along Fordham Boulevard south of Manning Drive parallel to Woodbine Drive, at the same time protecting the trees that remain there. The highway guard rail should also be extended down the hill from Kings Mill the rest of the way to the Manning intersection.

7. And finally, if the Council approves the closing Laurel Hill Road, my neighbors and I would appreciate assurances from UNC and the Garden that construction vehicles for this major project--between Laurel Hill Road and Old Mason Farm Road--will not be travelling through our neighborhood. Further, that any future bus routes connecting the Garden to the UNC campus would travel on Old Mason Farm Road and Fordham, and not through our neighborhood.

Thank you for your consideration.

Betsy Malpass

From: Jeffrey Vanke [mailto:jvanke@yahoo.com]  
Sent: Wednesday, October 27, 2004 11:17 AM  
To: Town Council  
Subject: Botanical Garden - Laurel Hill Rd.

Dear Chapel Hill Town Council:

I write requesting that the following comment be placed in the public record.

I frequently visit the UNC Botanical Garden with my two-year-old son. We walk across Laurel Hill Rd. twice each visit.

I support keeping the road open. It is no trouble for me to cross it with my toddler. In fact, the only traffic that has ever caused me to pause there was from Botanical Garden vehicles.

Signed,

Jeff Vanke  
Carrboro

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Do you Yahoo!?  
Yahoo! Mail Address AutoComplete - You start. We finish.  
[http://promotions.yahoo.com/new\\_mail](http://promotions.yahoo.com/new_mail)

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**From:** Jrasn@aol.com [mailto:Jrasn@aol.com]

**Sent:** Saturday, October 23, 2004 9:32 PM

**To:** Town Council

**Subject:** Proposed closing of Laurel Hill Road at the Botanical Garden area

Dear Mayor and Town Council,

My husband and I live at 916 Coker Drive--the corner property where the proposed road closure would occur. We discussed several of our concerns with a representative from the Botanical Garden but wanted to make sure that they also were brought directly to your attention.

1.) Our mailbox is currently located on the Botanical Garden side of Coker Drive. If the stop sign is removed at the corner of Coker Drive and Laurel Hill, we would no longer be able to safely retrieve our mail on that side of the road. We would like to be assured that our mailbox would be moved to the opposite side of Coker Drive (directly in front of our house) to ensure safe mail pick up.

2.) We would also like to know how long the access to our property and driveway would be blocked during the proposed widening of the street? Where will we be allowed to park and how far will we have to carry groceries, etc.? My husband has a bad knee--bad enough that he has a disability parking permit so this is important to us.

3.) We were assured (by the Botanical Garden representative) that our current property as it slopes down to the road (including the ivy and other plantings) would not be disturbed. We were also told that we would be able to choose the type of plantings that would be used to landscape the area that will be widened in front of our property on Laurel Hill and Coker Drive. We would like to have these assurances confirmed.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these concerns.

Janice (and Arthur) Anderson  
916 Coker Drive  
Chapel Hill, NC 27517  
919-933-5360



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**From:** NBHRobinson@aol.com [mailto:NBHRobinson@aol.com]

**Sent:** Sunday, October 24, 2004 6:00 PM

**To:** Town Council

**Subject:** Laurel Hill Road closing

To: Mayor Kevin Foy and members of the Chapel Hill Town Council

From: Nancy Howes Robinson

I am writing to encourage you to vote in favor of closing the section of Laurel Hill Road between Coker Dr. and Fordham Blvd. As you know this road bisects the North Carolina Botanical Garden with the garden parking area on one side and the plant collections, geographic regions, and the Totten Center office and meeting building on the other. My main reason for favoring the closing is one of safety. As a volunteer tour guide I lead many groups of school children across Laurel Hill Road. Even though the crossing gives a chance to practice stopping and looking both ways, it still makes me nervous to cross with large groups of young children.

If the road is closed and the pavement is removed, the area can be enhanced both environmentally and esthetically.

When the new Visitor Education Center is built near the current parking lot, the present nature trail, plant and display areas, and geographic regions can be better integrated without a paved road dividing the garden property.

Thank you for your attention to this proposal. Again, I urge you to vote in favor of closing this short section of Laurel Hill Road.

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**From:** Molly Raymond [mailto:mollyraymond@earthlink.net]  
**Sent:** Sunday, October 24, 2004 6:57 PM  
**To:** Town Council  
**Subject:** Laurel Hill Road Ext.

Dear Mayor Foy and Town Council Members:

I live on Laurel Hill Road Extension and have followed closely the discussions about closing the lower segment of the road. I want to inform you that I have no objection to the road closing under the conditions agreed upon by the Botanical Garden and our neighborhood association. I enjoy having the Botanical Garden as a neighbor and support their plans to further develop their site. Closing the road is a small inconvenience for a greater gain.

Sincerely,  
Molly Raymond

From: ktorrey@email.unc.edu [mailto:ktorrey@email.unc.edu]  
Sent: Thursday, October 21, 2004 7:47 PM  
To: Town Council  
Cc: morgancreek@lists.ibilio.org  
Subject: proposed closing of Laurel Hill Rd.

Members of the Town Council: one of my neighbors was good enough to read the following statement for me on Monday, 10/18, when I was in a class and unable to attend the Council meeting and public discussion. I wanted to give you a written version, as you deliberate on this question:

I have lived at 712 Coker Lane for the past 15 years and was a member of the King's Mill-Morgan Creek Neighborhood Association committee which met with the Botanical Garden, on behalf of the neighborhood, to discuss their plan to request closing of Laurel Hill Rd. We met with the Bot Garden every few months for over two years. We discussed many issues, some were closely related and some were less so.

Although the closing of Laurel Hill Rd. will undeniably direct more traffic onto certain streets in our neighborhood, and will be an inconvenience in other parts of the neighborhood, I believe that the plusses far outweigh the minuses, and I strongly support the Botanical Garden's request. Let me, briefly, tell you why

First, traffic on the 15-501 bypass has increased exponentially in the past few years and continues to increase. And the University's additional residential construction behind Kenan-Flagler and the Smith Center, as well as new construction on 15-501 South, promise only worsening traffic conditions for our neighborhood. Every morning, drivers are frustrated with the backups and look for a way around the Manning Hill light. It's my view that closing Laurel Hill Rd. will reduce the number of cars cutting into our neighborhood, looking for shortcuts to avoid congestion on 15-501. We are very concerned about this problem.

Second, over the course of two years, the Botanical Garden representatives have listened carefully and responded thoughtfully and creatively to every single question or objection that we as an Association brought to them. They have shown themselves to be good neighbors in addressing not only the question of how to preserve 24/7 bike and pedestrian access along Laurel Hill Rd., but also in helping us as a neighborhood (of which they are a part) think about how to solve some very serious traffic problems at other points along 15-501--specifically at Morgan Creek Dr., at Otey's Rd., at Kings' Mill, and at Old Mason Farm Rd. We look forward to working in concert with the Botanical Garden, and the town, to introduce safety improvements at these spots and to add a bus stop near the Ronald McDonald House. This would encourage Botanical Garden visitors to leave a car behind, and it would help our neighbors who wish to use public transportation in lieu of carbon-burning vehicles. And, of course, we are eager to get started on the ideas we've jointly hatched for a bike-pedestrian path that will connect our neighborhood with Glenwood Elementary School and Glenwood Shopping Center.

The third reason I support closing Laurel Hill Rd. is that the

Botanical Garden has assumed the sole responsibility for (a) the cost of engineering studies for the Coker Dr./ Laurel Hill intersection (b) for the construction costs both at that intersection as well as at Manning Drive and 15-501, and (c) the permitting process for all of this, through to completion. And, finally, they have agreed that Laurel Hill Rd. will not be closed until these other stages of the project have been completed.

I regard the Botanical Garden as a good neighbor. Our committee was impressed by their candor, by their thoughtful approach over the two-year process, and by their commitment to a vision of the Garden as an island of tranquility and a place where, despite the surrounding traffic and increasing urban density, we can all escape to immerse ourselves in the wonders of nature. --Kate Douglas Torrey, 712 Coker Lane, 929-4868

From: Loren Hintz [mailto:lhintz@chccs.k12.nc.us]  
Sent: Tuesday, October 12, 2004 10:56 AM  
To: Manager  
Subject: Fwd: laurel hill rd hearing and closing

Dear Town Council,

Oct. 11 2004

As a neighbor of the Botanical Garden I received the notice of the public hearing on the closing of a portion of Laurel Hill Rd. I support the proposal and hope the town will close Laurel Hill near the Botanical Garden with the stipulations suggested by the Garden and others.

I have used all of the entrances from 15-501 into Morgan Creek/ Kings Mill Rds and do not think that closing Laurel Hill will have much of a negative effect. During rush hour the back up on the bypass is so great that it is sometimes faster to go out Manning (with the light) than out Laurel Hill. At other times exiting Laurel Hill only saves at most a couple of minutes. During icy conditions the Kings Mill entrance is the safest due to the steep hills at Woodbine, Coker and Laurel Hill. The stipulations to improve the turn at Laurel Hill and Coker will also make it easier to navigate the area and resolve the school bus concerns. (My son rides the bus to Glennwood and I think the bus drivers already do a good job navigating the neighborhood.)

I have taken students, friends and family to the Garden and have always been concerned about traffic dividing the garden. It would be safer and a better garden visit experience if the road through the garden was closed. The stipulation to have 24/7 bike pedestrian access through the garden area is very important and helpful. We often bike or walk to the garden and on to Glennwood school and the shopping areas. A paved bike path would make it even easier and better.

There are a number of items related to traffic that I hope Council will also keep in mind.

1. Install Crosswalk and pedestrian signal at Manning and Fordham
2. Place a pedestrian/bike underpass connecting the NCGarden and neighborhoods to UNC
3. Note that the 24/7 garden bike/ped path connects to the task force proposal for the path to connect UNC and Glennwood.
4. Put a no U turn sign at the Kings Mill cut through on Fordham.
5. Create a bus pull out on Manning near family practice and on Fordham near the botanical garden.
6. Council should go on record now as opposing the 6 laning of Fordham Blvd.
7. Require a general stipulation (not specific like 1-6) to examine related transportation issues.

sincerely,

loren hintz

804 kings mill rd

chapel hill nc 27517

933-8987

PS the mailing that the town sent about the hearing has an out of date email address for the town manager ( my original email bounced.)

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**From:** Marilyn Hartman [mailto:marilynhartman@nc.rr.com]

**Sent:** Friday, November 12, 2004 3:52 PM

**To:** Cal Horton; billstrom@nc.rr.com; dverkerk@nc.rr.com; ed.harrison@mindspring.com; edithwiggins@nc.rr.com; hillcc@nc.rr.com; mark@cdpl.org; Kevin Foy; sally@ibiblio.org; windsorcircle@mindspring.com

**Cc:** morgancreek@lists.ibiblio.org

**Subject:** Closing Laurel Hill Road

To: The Mayor, Town Council and Town Manager

Regarding: The Closing of Laurel Hill Road

I am a resident of the Kings Mill neighborhood, and a member of the Kings Mill Morgan Creek Neighborhood Association board.

Although our board voted to support the move, it was a divided vote. I wish to share with you the thinking of many folks at 'our' end of the neighborhood in case you haven't already heard it: We're predominantly opposed.

Betsy Malpass asked a key question in a letter written to you yesterday:

Is closing Laurel Hill Road necessary, desirable, or prudent? Her answer was "no."

To save you the time of reading another long letter, I'd prefer to simply support the points that Ms. Malpass makes in her letter, and to suggest that there is a lot of concern in the 'hood.

Thanks to all of you for the time and dedication you give to the town's management.

Marilyn Hartman

903 Kings Mill Road

Chapel Hill NC 27517

phone: 919-967-5837

marilynhartman@nc.rr.com

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**From:** Marilyn Hartman [mailto:marilynhartman@nc.rr.com]  
**Sent:** Saturday, November 13, 2004 4:10 PM  
**To:** ggeorges@mindspring.com; Cal Horton; billstrom@nc.rr.com; dverkerk@nc.rr.com; ed.harrison@mindspring.com; edithwiggins@nc.rr.com; hillcc@nc.rr.com; mark@cdpl.org; Kevin Foy; sally@ibiblio.org; windsorcircle@mindspring.com  
**Cc:** morgancreek@lists.ibiblio.org  
**Subject:** Incalculable...

Greg: You tempt me too much. Please let me add to your witty number crunch.

**Incalculable: Supporting the University as it closes down a public road. Watching other neighborhoods struggle with the University's expansion over the protests of townspeople. Buying into the idea that this is a one-time-only move. Fearing that Kings Mill will soon look like Mason Farm Road. -mh**

At 05:05 PM 11/12/2004 -0500, Greg Georges wrote:

**The Closing of Laurel Hill is All About Numbers  
versus  
The Best and Highest Use of a Small Piece of Land**

<?xml:namespace prefix = o ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />

**Twenty-five.** An unscientific estimate of the number of neighbors who do not want Laurel Hill closed (there may not even be that many). **Four.** In the worst case, the number of minutes one might have to wait for a light to change to get on to 15-501 if  
<?xml:namespace prefix = st1 ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:smarttags" />Laurel Hill was closed. **1/10th.** The extra mileage one might have to drive to get to 15-501 should Laurel Hill be closed. **Seven.** The most ice days likely to ever occur in any given year that could (but not likely) make it more difficult to get to 15-501 if Laurel Hill were closed. **Three.** A good guess at the number of other unlisted reasons why people do not want Laurel Hill to be closed.

Those numbers total up to **39-1/2** vs.. the **thousands** of people over the coming years that are likely to have a far more enjoyable visit to the North Carolina Botanical Gardens if the tiny stretch of Lauren Hill were to be closed and turned into a greenway within the gardens.

If you have lived here for ten or more years look around you. Look at the once beautiful road that is now 54 all the way from Chapel Hill to Mebane on one side. On the other side take a good look at 54 from Chapel Hill toward Durham. Look at 15-501 all the way from Chapel Hill to who knows where. These massive civil engineering projects, which have taken years to build do help us get to get in our cars and go faster and more furiously than before just as having Laurel Hill remain open would do. Is that really the right priority?

Are we living better and in a better environment than we were ten years ago? Are we in an environment that is as beautiful as it was when many of us moved here? Has growth done us well? Will the new growth do much more than remove more greenways and add more roads and civil engineering projects?

Get your perspective right. Think of the big picture, not the fast furious self-oriented picture. Now tell me that it really is that wrong to give up a small stretch of road that splits the current Botanical Gardens in two. Do we really want to limit the ability of the Botanical Gardens to grow and to prevent it from putting in more greenway in place of the road many of us seem so emotional about? Is a vote against the closing of Laurel Hill Road a vote that strengthens or weakens a neighborhood asset that adds dollar value to all of our homes?

Come on neighbors! This is one of the very few times we can all support the closing of a road in exchange for more greenway. How often is such a vote even possible?

No I'm not one of your classic nut and granola freaks. I'm not even a nature freak in spite of being a nature photographer. But, I have lived long enough to wonder how and why we have damaged so much of our natural environment across all fifty states. I also am wondering how bad would it *really* be to add a little bit more green at the bottom of our neighborhood by giving up a small stretch of road.

Marilyn Hartman  
903 Kings Mill Road  
Chapel Hill NC 27517  
phone: 919-967-5837  
marilynhartman@nc.rr.com