

May 8, 2019

Dear Members of the Chapel Hill Town Council:

Kidzu is undeniably an asset to Chapel Hill. It is a real draw for people to go there, and as such, like any positive enterprise, it benefits its neighbors. If Kidzu wants to leave University Mall, that may be a signal of a larger issue here that presents a more serious threat to our town.

University Mall looks about half empty. Eastgate has several openings. And poor little Franklin Street is not the robust and inviting place it once was either. If you allow a specific business, and we agree--a really cool business, to petition to have green space rezoned to facilitate their moving out of University Mall it does three things:

- It contributes to the decay of the heart of Chapel Hill while promoting sprawl.
- It reduces tree-covered space that provides greenspace, permeable surface, habitat
- And it violates the agreements that the city made when the 312 acre-plot that became Southern Village was developed.

The Town Council has an opportunity here to engage in discussions with the managers of these retail properties to understand why retailers don't want to move there and don't stay there. It seems to us that you have some leverage here, in that you have the power to create these escape plans by changing the zoning and going back on old agreements, which will drain businesses from the heart of our city. Or, you could do the real adaptive work and address the real challenge of getting to bottom of why our town is starting to decay from its center?

Another issue related to going back on old agreements: how can the citizenry have confidence in any new agreements when old agreements are not stood by and honored? We think that is an issue that is important to consider. Why were those agreements made? What were the principles of those agreements and how can we continue to honor those principles? Allowing this zoning change and building Kidzu on this plot is admittedly a small thing, but it is slicing away at old agreements and leaving those agreements to a death by inches. We don't believe that is what the Town Council had in mind when those agreements were struck.

Thank you for giving deep consideration to these concerns.

Sincerely,

Claudia Fernandez
Katie Rosanbalm
Carroll Scott
Candace Dewith
Michelle Abel-Shoup
Thea Calhoun