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A Letter from the Hovey/Buell/Ledyard/Currier/Gould/Dorrance Neighborhood to the Planning Board, March 2005

We thank the Board for this opportunity to express some of our hopes and concerns regarding the future of the Hovey/Buell/Ledyard/Currier/Gould/Dorrance neighborhood. This area, consisting of roughly 40 predominantly single-family homes, contains a wide mixture of age groups and includes many children. It is heavily used by pedestrians, bikers, and joggers as an access corridor and recreation area connecting surrounding neighborhoods to the downtown, the High School, the Dartmouth campus, Mink Brook, the Community Center, St. Denis Church, and the Coop. We value our neighborhood for its close-knit residential character, its sense of community, its quiet pedestrian-friendly streets, its spirit of community service, its tall trees, its tranquil evenings, and its natural beauty. We were drawn here by a desire to be a part of a cohesive neighborhood within walking distance to the downtown area - a neighborhood where our children could easily play with other children and a place where we could safely walk or bike to nearby houses, work places, events, shops and restaurants.

The ongoing commercial development of the greater Hanover area, particularly at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, Centerra, and in downtown Hanover, has inevitably had an impact on everyone, but it poses a particular challenge to the continued vibrancy, safety and character of close-in neighborhoods such as ours. Continually increasing traffic congestion provides a compelling incentive for thousands of commuters each day to bypass the core downtown area, and has resulted in a dramatic rise in cut-through traffic on our streets over the past decade. This traffic, in addition to posing a safety problem and discouraging pedestrian and bike travel, isolates our homes from one another and makes our neighborhood less cohesive. With the South Block development by Dartmouth and the proposed extension of South Street to Hovey Lane recommended by the Downtown Visioning Committee and the In-Town Traffic Study Committee, Currier Place is poised to become a major thoroughfare for cars and trucks, marooning the residents to the west of Currier (e.g. Gould Road and Dorrance Place) in a sea of traffic, and making pedestrian and bike transit between those areas and the High School

increasing difficult and hazardous. While we are grateful to the town officials for the measures they have recently implemented on Hovey Lane, Buell Street and Currier Place, traffic issues continue to be a major concern for many of us.

Another area of deep concern is the preservation of the natural buffers that define the boundaries of our neighborhood. These buffer zones, which permit our residential streets and the raising of young children to co-exist with the adjacent busyness of the downtown business district and the High School, are being increasingly eroded by various ongoing or planned development projects on the fringes of our neighborhood. These include the South Block project, the development of Sargent Block (slated to include a multi-level underground parking garage next to St. Denis Church), the expansion of the Howe Library, the planned placement of a larger parking lot on Hovey Lane, the addition of a large smoke-stack behind Hanover High School, the recent loss of the large trees at 12 Ledyard Lane next to the library, and the possible extension of South Street onto Hovey Lane. While some of these changes reflect gains for the community at large and are viewed positively by many of us, the collective loss or degradation of these buffer zones or natural barriers, in conjunction with the more intense urbanization of the immediately surrounding areas, also poses a potential problem for our neighborhood. We are concerned that the traffic, noise, light and air pollution resulting from the surrounding development, which seems to be accelerating and in most cases will be permanent, will undermine the quiet, residential, small-town character of our neighborhood that we value so much.

A final issue concerns our hope that a better channel of communication can be opened between our neighborhood, the Planning Board, and the Zoning Board, so that we can more effectively participate in the decision making process on major issues that potentially impact not just the abutters of a given project but the broader neighborhood as well. Examples include the recent variance granted at 12 Ledyard Lane, which resulted in the loss of many large trees in a highly visible area separating our neighborhood from the downtown, as well as the proposed parking lot on Hovey Lane. In both cases many people - some living very close to the projects in question - had no idea what was happening while the critical decisions were being made. The present invitation by the

Planning Board to discuss our vision and concerns of the neighborhood is a great and much appreciated step in the right direction - thank you again.

Motivated by these concerns we ask the Board to do what it can to help us achieve the following general goals:

-Maintain and restore the safety, livability and pedestrian-friendly character of our streets by reducing cut-through traffic to the levels specified in the Hanover Traffic Policy (to no more than 30% of the total traffic volume)

-Preserve the quiet small town character of our neighborhood by protecting the surrounding natural forested buffers

-Keep noise, light and air pollution associated with the surrounding commercial and public facilities to levels that are compatible with a residential neighborhood

-Search for ways to broaden communication between the Planning and Zoning Boards and our neighborhood on issues relating to surrounding development

In addition to these general goals, we would also like to offer some suggestions regarding several specific issues:

1. Proposed parking lot on Hovey Lane

The section of Hovey Lane along the High School soccer field is heavily used by pedestrians. The proposed presence of a denser parking lot on Hovey Lane will discourage this use and will exacerbate safety concerns that are already an issue. In addition, the proposed expansion would result in the loss of trees and green space at the end of the soccer field. Many of us regard these features as an important natural buffer between our neighborhood and the less-residential areas associated with Lebanon Street, the Church parking lot, and the High School. It would therefore seem more appropriate to either situate this denser parking lot in some area closer to Lebanon Street or, preferably, to eliminate the need for the lot by improving the public transportation options offered by the

school.

2. Sidewalks and Paths

There is enthusiasm in our neighborhood for a walking path parallel to the High School football field, somewhere inside the present location of the chain-link fence and trees on the east side of Hovey Lane. There has been a suggestion, seconded by many, that a non-paved path as opposed to a concrete sidewalk would be more consistent with our goal of preserving the green space and the residential character of our neighborhood. Several residents have asked to see details of the plan before making a final commitment. We hope to reach neighborhood agreement regarding a path or sidewalk soon.

3. Temporary Barriers on Hovey Lane and Buell Street

We greatly appreciate the ongoing efforts of the Select Board and town officials to calm traffic in our neighborhood. Many residents feel the concrete barriers on Hovey Lane and Buell Street have been helpful in this regard. We support the Select Board's proposal to explore friendlier-looking alternatives to these structures.

4. Traffic Calming and Currier Place

If South Street is extended to Hovey Lane, the already popular use of Currier Place as a way to avoid downtown traffic is likely to increase significantly. This will effectively divide our neighborhood into two isolated parts. We hope a solution to this highly undesirable outcome can be found that preserves the unity and livability of the entire neighborhood.

5. Lighting

To preserve as much of our dark sky as possible, we encourage the use of full-cut-off shielded streetlights in and around our neighborhood. These fixtures direct nearly all of the light downward onto the street, conserving energy, reducing glare, and eliminating "light trespass" into our windows. The use of low wattage high-pressure sodium bulbs would save electricity and maintain a different look from the commercial part of town. Examples can be found along