

What's Really at Stake at 5000 Duraleigh Road

A plain-language guide to the technical case against the proposed rezoning (Case Z-35-26)

Neighbors are opposing this rezoning, and it's easy to assume that's just a matter of not wanting more traffic or more neighbors. It isn't. The opposition is built on five separate, documented technical problems with this specific property — problems the developer has not yet been required to study or answer. Here's what they are, in plain terms.

1. What's underneath the site

Just beneath a thin layer of topsoil, most of the buildable part of this property sits on solid granite bedrock. Building here — laying foundations, running utility lines, installing stormwater systems — will require blasting or heavy mechanical excavation, on a slope that drops steeply toward the creek. No one has produced an engineering study showing this can be done safely near homes and buried utility lines.

2. Where the water goes

This site drains directly into Crabtree Creek, which is already legally recognized as an impaired waterway — it carries pollution left over from old industrial sites upstream. Covering more of this property with roofs, driveways, and parking means more rainwater runs off faster instead of soaking into the ground, carrying whatever it picks up straight into an already-struggling creek. No study has shown the drainage plan can handle it.

3. What happens to the sewage

The sewer line that would serve this development already carries wastewater from the 300-plus units built next door. Nobody has produced a study showing there's room in that pipe for another development on top of what's already there. Without that study, the risk is backups and overflows — not hypothetically, but as a straightforward capacity question nobody has answered.

4. Getting in and out safely

The only way in or out of this site is a single right-turn-only driveway on a divided road that also carries heavy quarry truck traffic on steep grades — the same stretch of road that ices over in winter. No independent traffic safety study has evaluated whether adding a high-density entrance here is safe under real conditions, for drivers or for emergency responders trying to reach the site. Raleigh's zoning code also requires two separate entrances for a project this size — and there isn't room for a second one on this site's frontage without a variance.

5. What's buried in the ground

In 1977, an asphalt plant on this property caught fire. That kind of fire can leave behind contamination in the soil that doesn't go away on its own. Before anyone digs foundations or trenches through that ground, the soil should be tested. As of today, it hasn't been.

Why this matters legally

State law doesn't just require City Council to want this project — it requires them to be able to show, on the record, that approving it is reasonable. Right now, the record doesn't contain the studies needed to make that call on any of the five points above. We're not asking Council to kill this project forever. We're asking them to require the missing studies before they vote — the same standard any responsible decision-maker would apply to a project with this many open questions.

Other Important Impacts Beyond the Site

This site is also fully forested in important mature upland and wetland forests that provide key habitats for large and small mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. Notable examples include deer, racoons, wild turkeys, pileated and many other woodpeckers, owls, nesting hawks, seasonal migratory songbirds and pool-breeding amphibians. These attributes are part of Raleigh's natural legacy, that must also be considered under the comprehensive zoning ordinance. This forest operates ecologically as a direct extension of Umstead State Park, and a key portion of the wildlife corridor along Crabtree Creek. Heavy construction will also have a massive impact on the thousands of citizens who use the greenway that passes through the site.

— If you'd like the full technical dossier this summary is drawn from along with other information about this project go to duraleighforest.org



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