



CITY OF DURHAM | DURHAM COUNTY  
NORTH CAROLINA



MEMORANDUM

April 21, 2011

**To:** Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager

**Through:** Steven L. Medlin, AICP, Planning Director *SLM*  
Patrick O. Young, AICP, Assistant Planning Director *POY*

**From:** Scott Whiteman, AICP, Planning Supervisor *SW*

**Subject:** Resolution of Support for the Closing of Pickett Road Closing Through the Hollow Rock Access Area in Orange County

**Summary:** The Hollow Rock Access Area Master Plan, adopted by City Council on November 16, 2009, recommends closing Pickett Road through the proposed Hollow Rock Park. While the portion of Pickett Road to be closed is entirely within Orange County's jurisdiction, its closure would have a significant impact on Durham residents. At the suggestion of the Durham-Chapel Hill-Orange County Work Group (DURCHO), Planning staff organized and conducted a meeting for residents in the vicinity of Pickett Road. Approximately 55 people attended, and comments regarding the closing of Pickett Road received at the meeting were mixed (See Attachment 2). The primary concern of the attendees both in favor and opposed was the need for a traffic signal at the intersection of Randolph and Erwin Roads. City Transportation also performed a traffic analysis (see attachment 3) in the area which determined that signal warrants were met at the intersection of Randolph Road and Erwin Road, and Kerley Road and Erwin Road.

**Recommendation:** Receive the report and adopt a resolution in support of closing Pickett Road in Orange County, subject to the installation of a traffic signal at the intersection Erwin Road and Randolph Road, and that an easement be retained for public use for bicycle and pedestrian access.

**Background:** The Master Plan for the Hollow Rock Access Area was developed as a partnership between the City of Durham, Durham County, Orange County and the Town of Chapel Hill. The future parkland is bisected by Pickett Road, which the

master plan recommended closing to provide better pedestrian connectivity and allow for parking (see attachment 4).

The section of Pickett Road to be closed is designated as a minor thoroughfare on the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Urban Area Thoroughfare Plan. However, the Thoroughfare Plan is to be superceded within the next year by the Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP). Transportation staff anticipates that Pickett Road will be designated as a local street, not a thoroughfare, in the CTP. The road is currently unpaved west of the Trinity School, and no improvements are proposed or funded. Pickett Road is maintained by North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT).

The portion of Pickett Road proposed for closure is entirely within Orange County. In order to close the road, the State Board of Transportation must vote to remove it from the State system, and a street closing petition must be approved by the Orange County Board of Commissioners. While the street closing is not within Durham's jurisdiction, the Orange County representative from DURCHO have requested that the City Council and Board of Commissioners adopt resolutions of support to be forwarded to Orange County.

In June of 2010, Durham Planning staff organized and conducted a community meeting to receive public input about the potential closure of Pickett Road. The purpose of the meeting was to receive input from Durham County residents, who would be most impacted by the decision even though the road segment proposed to be closed is within Orange County. Approximately 55 people attended. Comments voiced by the attendees at the meeting itself were generally mixed. Written comments received after the meeting (see attachment 2) were generally in favor. The most frequent comment from both supporters and opponents was that a traffic light was needed at the intersection of Erwin Road and Randolph Road.

In the fall of 2010, the City Transportation Department agreed to perform a traffic analysis at three intersections in the vicinity of Pickett Road (see attachment 3): Erwin Road at Randolph Road, Erwin Road at Kerley Road, and Pickett Road at Randolph Road. The study concluded the first two intersections already meet signal warrants, regardless whether or not Pickett Road is closed. The intersection of Pickett Road and Randolph Road does not meet signal warrants in either case. Due to insufficient space, traffic signals cannot be placed at both the Erwin/Randolph and the Erwin/Kerley intersections. Transportation's study recommends that a traffic signal be placed at the Erwin/Randolph intersection and that a roundabout be placed at the Erwin/Kerley intersection in lieu of a traffic signal. The results of this study and the traffic signal warrant information has been forwarded to the NCDOT. Installation of a traffic signal or roundabout at these intersections would be at the discretion of the NCDOT because the intersections are outside the boundary of the City of Durham and are state maintained.

At the December 2010 Durham-Chapel Hill-Orange Work Group meeting, some members requested crash data for the intersection of Erwin Road and Pickett Road. While raw accident data is available from NCDOT, the City Transportation Department does not currently have resources available to provide analysis for intersection outside of the City's jurisdiction. It should be noted that even if Pickett Road is closed, a driveway to Hollow Rock Park is proposed in the same location.

Chapter 8 of the Comprehensive Plan recommends focusing on connectivity in the transportation system, and the Unified Development Ordinance regulates new subdivisions based on a connectivity ratio. Closing the subject portion of Pickett Road would negatively affect vehicle connectivity in this area, effectively requiring a more circuitous route for drivers in Durham County to access the new park. However, by maintaining pedestrian and bicycle access as recommended by the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC), connectivity for walkers and bicyclists would remain unchanged. This is consistent with what is shown on the Hollow Rock Master Plan.

**Issues/Analysis:** The closing of Pickett Road could have an impact on Durham residents, particularly those who live on Randolph Road. However, leaving the road open could undermine the public and private investment in the Hollow Rock Access Area.

The subject section of Pickett Road had only 645 daily trips in 2009, compared to 3,972 on Randolph Road. It is reasonable to assume that many of the Pickett Road trips would be diverted to Randolph Road, as the closest alternative route. The provision of a traffic signal at the intersection of Randolph Road and Erwin Road would address present circulation and safety problems at that location, and could help alleviate the impacts of the additional traffic. While a roundabout is warranted by current conditions at the intersection of Kerley Road and Erwin Road, that location would be less impacted by the closure of Pickett Road and could be cost prohibitive.

**Alternatives:** The Council could elect to not approve a resolution of support.

**Staff Contact:** Scott Whiteman, AICP, Planning Supervisor, 560-4137 ext. 28253 or [scott.whiteman@durhamnc.gov](mailto:scott.whiteman@durhamnc.gov).

**Attachments:** Attachment 1: Context Map  
Attachment 2: Neighborhood Meeting Comments  
Attachment 3: Traffic Analysis Report  
Attachment 4: Hollow Rock Access Area Master Plan  
Attachment 5: Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission Letter  
Attachment 6: Resolution