

*Via Email*

Katherine Ansardi  
208 Trotters Ridge Dr  
Raleigh, NC 27614

Hart's Mill, LLC  
1031 Frazier Rd  
Mebane, NC 27302

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Orange County Board of County Commissioners  
131 W. Margaret Lane  
Hillsborough, NC 27278

**RE: MPD-CZ Application (Buc-ee's)**

Dear Commissioners,

I am a managing member of Hart's Mill, LLC, which owns 112 acres located less than 3 miles from the applicant's project. Ironically, we obtained the same Master Plan Development Conditional Zoning designation for our small agrarian-based community as the applicant is seeking. The goals and scale of the two projects could not be more different!

We've all seen this scenario play out over and over. A large out-of-state company with deep pockets purchases land, hires expensive consultants, presents its project with slick marketing, and promises jobs for the local economy. Elected officials and regulatory agencies dutifully vet the project with myriad complex technical requirements and reviews. But barring any extraordinary circumstances or extremely vocal and well-funded public opposition, the outcome is pretty much assumed. Public comment sessions are largely theatrical exercises.

There's a saying, "knowing the price of everything and the value of nothing" which comes to mind.

While the legal and regulatory checkboxes may have been ticked off by diligent staff members and consultants, the overarching context of values and long-term consequences seems to have been ignored. This is where we look to elected officials for discernment and wisdom in service of the broader public good rather than simply deferring to the technical experts.

Orange County has made a formal commitment to promoting sustainable development. Are those empty words? There is nothing remotely "sustainable" about this project – economically, environmentally, or socially.

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From an economic perspective, this is simply another example of corporate colonization. That is, a distant company owns local assets and takes the profits, while providing a few low-wage local jobs.

Economists have extensively documented the impacts of locally owned businesses versus those owned by remote corporations. When business profits are spent locally, a “multiplier effect” is generated. For every \$1 of locally-created and locally-spent profit, the local community might see a \$5 boost in economic activity.<sup>1</sup>

*Once a community loses local ownership of local land, industry or retail businesses, whatever profits that community generates and would otherwise enjoy, will be sucked out of that community. **Given the multiplier effect, the resultant losses to the local community can be devastating.***

*Wages alone are not enough to sustain a local economy; **profits** are the lifeblood of any community.<sup>1</sup>*

Broader potential negative impacts to the health of people and ecosystems are similarly overlooked in the review process. With only minimal effort, one can find research documenting the hazards of airborne volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and the routine small surface spills and droplets generated by gasoline service stations.<sup>2,3</sup> Findings indicate that negative impacts to human health and ecosystems are likely greater than generally recognized or addressed by current regulations. For example, researchers suggest minimum setbacks from residences, hospitals, schools, etc. ranging from about 150 ft to 300 ft.<sup>2</sup>

Yet the applicant for this project has rejected the modest 100 ft setback from adjacent homes as too much. What do we make of the fact that our small residential community was required to maintain a 100 ft setback from adjacent neighbors when applying for the same MPD-CZ designation, yet a 50 ft setback is viewed as acceptable for this huge, high-impact project? VOCs and groundwater contamination are not stopped by walls or extra vegetation.

Most concerning, the available research was conducted on much more modest-sized facilities. It does not appear that any significant research has been done on these newer mega-sized facilities. One study cited even calls attention to this fact. However, it is well documented in natural, technical, and social sciences that scaled-up systems do not behave simply as larger versions of small ones. Very large systems have unique and often unpredictable dynamics of their own.

Has anyone actually conducted research on a facility of the type and scale that the applicant is proposing? Will Orange County be an unfortunate lab rat?

In closing, we have 10 years—or less—to drastically slash carbon emissions and *maybe* avert the worst impacts of global climate change. Even the automobile industry sees the writing on

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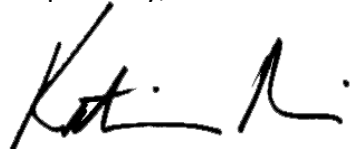
the wall and is committed to largely phasing out gasoline/diesel-powered vehicles by the end of the decade.<sup>4</sup> Useless fueling stations will be abandoned and communities will be left to clean up the mess in short order.

Yet Orange County appears to be on the verge of greenlighting a monstrous shrine to fossil fuels as if it is business as usual.

Will we be like the people of Easter Island who, when faced with ecological disaster, continued to build ever larger monuments to their gods rather than change—until nothing was left?

Or will the County Commissioners exercise wisdom and foresight by denying approval of this ill-advised project?

Respectfully,



Katherine Ansardi  
Managing Member  
Hart's Mill, LLC (dba Common Ground Ecovillage)  
[katy@hartsmill.org](mailto:katy@hartsmill.org)

*Selected references (more available upon request):*

**(1) When companies export profit from local economy, negative multiplier effect kicks in**  
<https://tntrafficticket.us/2014/11/when-companies-export-profit-from-local-economy-negative-multiplier-effect-kicks-in/>

**(2) Assessing the impact of petrol stations on their immediate surroundings**  
[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Marta\\_Doval/publication/46109925\\_Assessing\\_the\\_impact\\_of\\_petrol\\_stations\\_on\\_their\\_immediate\\_surroundings/links/59a90994458515eafa8b1394/Assessing-the-impact-of-petrol-stations-on-their-immediate-surroundings.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Marta_Doval/publication/46109925_Assessing_the_impact_of_petrol_stations_on_their_immediate_surroundings/links/59a90994458515eafa8b1394/Assessing-the-impact-of-petrol-stations-on-their-immediate-surroundings.pdf)

**(3) Small Spills at Gas Stations Could Cause Significant Public Health Risks Over Time**  
<https://www.jhsph.edu/news/news-releases/2014/small-spills-at-gas-stations-could-cause-significant-public-health-risks-over-time.html>

**(4) The future of the automotive industry is electric**  
<https://sites.duke.edu/perspective/2018/12/20/the-future-of-the-automotive-industry-is-electric/>