



SIERRA CLUB Orange/Chatham Group

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To: Carrboro Mayor and Board of Aldermen
From: Orange/Chatham Sierra Club Group
Subject: The Google Relay Facility

Orange County Board of Commissioners
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We understand that the town is cooperating with Google Fiber [now Alphabet Corporation] to provide high-speed Internet connections to the town and parts of Chapel Hill and Orange County. Google required that the site for a small building for its hub with its computers and 120,000 BTU of air conditioners to keep it cool be on town land. Work has begun on the chosen site, a small parcel of town land connected to the Westwood Cemetery on Fidelity St. A number of trees have been cut down to make room for the building, which adheres closely enough to the custom-written relevant ordinance—less than 15 feet high and less than 500 square feet total—that it doesn't require a public hearing.

While this plan, in the process of being implemented, puts the area on the path to high-speed connectivity, we think that other sites should be considered before work goes on. We would like the construction to pause briefly while Google and the Town of Carrboro consider putting this hub on another site. For instance, the OWASA property is very close by and it offers greater security: there is a wrought-iron fence around OWASA facilities, three fire hydrants in close proximity, back-up power, professional noise abatement, and a 24/7 staff of engineers. The OWASA Board has indicated that its campus might be an appropriate place for the relay facility—preliminary idea, worth following up.

If Google takes over the site next to the cemetery, that locks up one of the last open spaces in Carrboro and puts noisy machines next to the meadow adjoining the cemetery. We think that may be a prime site for a municipal park and would hate to see that potential lost. This meadow is one of the few potential parks south of Main Street. Rushing construction without the usual public hearings would perhaps give Google an edge over its competitors, but would definitely have a negative impact on the town's environment.

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