

Although it may be expected that residents of an old, quaint neighborhood will object to a new housing development in their midst, this particular plan is especially objectionable. It is so poorly sited that it boggles the mind. There are very good reasons why these particular plots of land have not already been developed in the past hundred years, and those reasons have only accumulated as our understanding of proper land use and careful traffic engineering have advanced.

Let's go over just a few of them:

1. This stretch of Chapman Highway that Locust Hill Lane intersects is a daily hazard for anyone using it, and there do not appear to be any fixes on the way. The lack of turning lanes, the poor sight lines, and the constant speeding by commuters cause terrible accidents here on a regular basis. The wail of sirens approaching the area is a familiar sound.

Driving in and out of Locust Hill Lane is particularly dangerous — possibly the worst street to enter and exit Chapman Highway, in my opinion. If you stop your car on Chapman to turn left onto Locust Hill during busy traffic, it's almost guaranteed that you will eventually be rear-ended. Drivers go too fast and do not pay attention to brake lights or turn signals. (It happened to me within a month of moving into the neighborhood.) If you are trying to pull out of Locust Hill onto Chapman, oncoming traffic from your left is difficult to see due to an incline, and it's especially bad when the city allows the roadside grass to grow too high — which it often does.



See the above photo of an oncoming car on Chapman from the driver's vantage point on Locust Hill — how easily can you spot it through the grass?

Meanwhile, oncoming traffic from your right is also difficult to see due to a utility pole that's directly in your line of site.

Every departure is a gamble, turning left or right. My wife had a horrific accident last year that completely destroyed our car. Luckily, the airbags saved her life.

If more houses are built on Locust Hill, thereby increasing the number of people who must enter and exit the highway, it is inevitable that we will see even more traffic accidents — and potentially more fatalities.

2. The terrain itself is ill-suited for housing developments. Rocky, steep, prone to sinkholes and tree falls — and (according to our neighbors) home to an underlying cave system — why does this developer think these are easily surmounted problems? Rather, I should ask, why would Knoxville-Knox County Planning have faith in these developers to overcome those obstacles? I'm not an engineer, so I cannot assess the feasibility of their architectural plans — but neither have I seen an assessment by Planning. Has this been done?

Have projections been made of the long-term effects that such a development would have in terms of erosion and run-off? Is this land stable enough to support such structures for the long term? And does the developer really know what it's doing?

These are genuine questions that I have — I wonder if the potentially serious ramifications of this project have been expertly considered yet.

3. Locust Hill Lane itself is a narrow, winding dead-end street — picturesque, no doubt, but that's offset by its often difficult passage. The street can barely accommodate on-street parking as it is; adding more houses opposite from the ones that already use on-street parking will make it even more problematic for large trucks to get through. Garbage collection, utility repairs (for frequent power outages), and emergency services already have a difficult time — adding even more obstacles in the form of parked vehicles will only make this situation worse. Include the now-annual sheet of ice that covers Locust Hill during the winter — and the lack of any salt coverage by the city — and it's not difficult to predict the results. (Meanwhile, how does the developer propose to construct these houses without frequently shutting down the street altogether with its construction and delivery vehicles?)

4. This area is a pocket wilderness with an amazing array of fauna. Homeowners here frequently see families of deer and wild turkeys crossing the street. Coyotes and owls make their presence known at night with their calls. Hawks circle above. We have our own resident peacock who visits us from house to house. I'm not sure how this development will affect their habitat, but it is a question worth investigating. Where will they go?

5. Given all these various difficulties, you may wonder why people bother to live on Locust Hill Lane at all. As I mentioned above, the answer is because it's old and (still) quaint. The heavy tree coverage (until the developer wiped out quite a bit of it in that particular section of the neighborhood), the shady winding road, and the presence of wild animals still roaming of their own accord makes it something special.

That unique combination of ridge-top wilderness and suburban living is an environment that is fast disappearing from South Knoxville. I think it's worth preserving in this case — especially when considering the dubious prospects of this development on shaky ground.

—*Coury Turczyn*