

PETITION FOR ANNEXATION OF THE REMAINDER OF CHOCOLATE DROP MOUNTAIN ROAD BY
THE TOWN OF COLUMBUS, NORTH CAROLINA

Dear Mayor McCool and Town Council Members,

We, the undersigned residents of Chocolate Drop Subdivision, Section I (established in 1980 by developer, Jack L. Story), are writing to you regarding the illegal annexation of a section of our neighborhood's private road, Chocolate Drop Mountain Road, in early 2022. While we strongly condemn the unauthorized action, we believe there is an opportunity to rectify this situation in a manner that benefits both our neighborhood and the Town as a whole.

We propose a solution that involves the legal annexation of the remaining section of Chocolate Drop Mountain Road by the Town (roughly a length of 850 feet), solely for the purpose of road maintenance, repair, and snow removal. It is important to note that this annexation would only encompass the main neighborhood road and not any part of the individual lots. Additionally, we suggest implementing a moratorium on any potential fees or taxes related to this annexation for a minimum of 10 years. Should any such fees or taxes be implemented after the moratorium, an appropriate amount would also need to be levied on the owners of lots in the Chocolate Drop Mountain Subdivision (established in 2007 by LGI), and, in essence, the Town itself for the vacant lots within Chocolate Drop Mountain Subdivision that are owned by the Town of Columbus and maintained by the Saluda Land Trust, where a public park is proposed, as these owners/entities also make use of the portion of Chocolate Drop Mountain Road between Houston Road and Lone Cypress Trail. The following points outline our petition and the benefits of this proposed solution:

Legal Compliance: Annexing the remaining section of Chocolate Drop Mountain Road through proper legal procedures would rectify the initial illegal annexation, ensuring adherence to established regulations.

Road Maintenance and Repair: By officially annexing the remaining portion of the road, the responsibility for its maintenance and repair would shift to the local government, relieving individual residents of this burden and ensuring proper upkeep for the benefit of the entire community. Furthermore, the Town would add to the total road mileage for which it is responsible to maintain, enabling the Town to apply for more state funding from the Powell Bill.

Snow Removal: The annexation would enable the Town to take charge of snow removal operations for the entire road, not just a portion of it, eliminating potential complications stemming from two different service providers plowing different portions of the road, thereby improving access to our neighborhood during winter months, and promoting safety for residents, delivery and emergency vehicles, and visitors.

Community Collaboration: This proposed solution fosters collaboration between the Town and the neighborhood, as it allows for a dialogue on road-related matters. Inclusive decision-making processes, such as public hearings and community engagement, would ensure that the interests and concerns of the community are taken into account.

We, the undersigned residents of Chocolate Drop Subdivision, Section I, respectfully request the following:

Legal Annexation: We urge the Town to undertake the legal annexation of the remaining section of Chocolate Drop Mountain Road solely for the purpose of road maintenance, repair, and snow removal. The annexation should not include any part of the individual lots. Lot owners will retain responsibility for mowing lawns, and trimming trees and bushes on their lots near and hanging over the road.

Moratorium on Potential Fees and Taxes: We propose a moratorium on any potential fees or taxes related to this annexation for a minimum of 10 years, allowing residents time to adjust to any changes, and alleviating financial burdens during the transition. Should any such fees or taxes be implemented after the moratorium, an appropriate amount would also be levied on the owners of lots in the Chocolate Drop Mountain Subdivision (established in 2007 by LGI), including the Town itself for the vacant lots, as these owners/entities also make use of the portion of Chocolate Drop Mountain Road between Houston Road and Lone Cypress Trail.

Transparent Consultation Process: We request a transparent and inclusive consultation process that includes public hearings, written notifications to neighborhood residents, community engagement, and opportunities for residents to express their opinions and contribute to the decision-making process.

Long-term Planning: We encourage the Town to engage in long-term planning for the maintenance and improvement of our neighborhood's road. This should include regular inspections, proactive maintenance strategies, and open communication channels with residents.

We firmly believe that this proposed solution serves the best interests of both our neighborhood and the Town as a whole. It rectifies the illegal annexation, ensures proper road maintenance and snow removal, safety and accessibility, and promotes collaboration between the Town and the community.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We anticipate a positive response and a commitment from the Town to address our concerns and work towards a mutually beneficial solution.

Yours sincerely,

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