

## Arguments Used by University Officials for Paving Redbud Woods

### **1. Female students need to park there. Without the lot, female students are in danger of sexual assault.**

*\*It is not clear how a parking lot decreases the incidence of sexual assault, or that the University builds parking lots with the intent of decreasing sexual assault. Further, how safe would the proposed lot be, with its vegetative shielding and access via a long and winding path?*

### **2. Elderly faculty members must park there in order to participate in the new West.**

*\*Elderly faculty who can walk up from the proposed lot to West Campus (up the very steep University Avenue) are clearly capable of walking a similar distance – like down Libe Slope)*

### **3. If you cannot produce 310 permits, the demand for the new lot is clear.**

*\*Without help from Transportation & Mail Services (such as lists of permit-holders) or the return of most of our community members in late August, of course we cannot produce 310 permits. More importantly, this argument obfuscates our point that managing transportation is more complex than producing a few permits, and the fact that the production of 310 permits is hardly a solution. How are we, moreover, to deliver permits “in perpetuity,” when so many of the relevant permit-holders are students? In addition, it is unclear that 310 permit-holders exist in the locations Vice President Murphy delineated, or how their sacrifice would alter the dynamics of the “parking crisis” about which we hear so much.*

### **4. ADA requires Cornell to provide parking for the new West.**

*\*University Ave’s sidewalks are not shoveled, and are very steep. The path from West to the Lot is not wheelchair-friendly.*

### **5. Faculty members will not participate in new West without guaranteed parking.**

*\*The Redbuds Faculty Working Group has secured over 60 faculty commitments for the 2005-6 academic year, the sponsors of each having pledged to participate without guaranteed parking specifically to demonstrate to the Administration that their participation does not require parking.*

### **6. The City of Ithaca requires because of the new West.**

*\*The City of Ithaca sued Cornell several times to prevent the demolition of Redbud Woods; it does not require Cornell to make this lot or any other. Susan Murphy stated in one of the RB negotiations in her office a few weeks ago that CU HAD to build the parking lot to be in compliance with city regulations. Yet VP Murphy testified to a city official (Phyllis Radke) that Cornell has at present more than enough parking spaces to be in compliance with the parking space/CU student-fac-staff ratio established by the city. That is, even WITHOUT the University Ave parking lot.*

### **7. We’ve already spent too much money to reconsider the project.**

*\*An error carried forward remains erroneous. Is it impossible to discuss with Economy Paving a cancellation of an already-signed contract with the option to transfer some or all of the monies already paid to a different project? Perhaps potholes could be filled, or bike-lanes created.*

**8. Construction workers need to park there. Specifically, in August a “boom” of construction activity will require 300+ parking spaces.**

*\*The lot cannot be completed in time to accommodate this “boom.” Temporary lots can be located in front of the Kahin Center, or workers can park in A+B lots. Parking on Libe slope can be expanded temporarily. Permits can be rescinded at the Kahin Center, 660 Stewart, Von Cramm, and other nearby student lots. Fear of paying construction workers for the distance between A+B lots and their sites should be assuaged when we consider the distance from the proposed lot to construction sites near the Center for Jewish Living relative to the costs of bussing workers from A+B to these sites. It does not seem impossible, moreover, for construction workers to carpool – if only from A+B to their respective sites on West.*

**9. Without student parking, students will matriculate elsewhere.**

*\*All of West Campus’ new students agreed to live there during AY2005-6 without parking. More urban schools (such as Harvard, Columbia, Penn, NYU, Berkeley) have unimaginably more difficult parking scenarios and do not suffer low enrollment as a result.*

**10. A water tank might be placed on the site.**

*\*The City of Ithaca has contemplated a small water tank on the extreme northwest corner of the site. However, according to Vice President Murphy, Cornell can offer the City all the water pressure it would need in the event of a fire along University Avenue below the Lake Street intersection. Further, the water tank may be a matter of life safety; the lot is not.*

**11. “Students need to visit their friends on weekends.” Bill Wendt’s response to Ithaca Landmarks Preservation Committee, December 2003 query: “What is the educational purpose of this parking lot?”**

*\*Though we disagree that Mr. Wendt’s answer satisfies the demand of an educational use, it is clear from Mr. Wendt’s testimony that students need their cars seldom – and thus they can park them in the enormous A+B lots.*

**12. It’s not “historic.”**

*\*It IS part of the Treman Estate, which Treman intended as a natural or undeveloped area. The fact that it was lightly forested in 1903 is beside the point. Much of the forest in the Northeast today has grown up in the last century. Today we recognize, and Cornell speaks often of, the need to limit greenhouse gasses and avoid the destruction of the earth’s dwindling green areas. One issue here is that trees are to be destroyed unnecessarily, for no purpose higher than 176 parking spaces, when there are many alternatives –like banning freshman cars, rewarding those eligible for parking spaces with transportation vouchers, bicycles or other advantages, building bike lanes and racks, subsidizing new and convenient transportation (both local and to the cities where most CU students live or visit) to discourage bringing cars to campus, and coordinating a large and visionary educational awareness campaign linking global environmental issues with local actions by the University, students, and faculty).*

**13. The Woods is not historic, nor is it ecologically valuable. It has no endangered species that we know of, no “valuable” plant life, and some of it is “invasive;” it is just an “overgrown lawn.”**

*\*Redbud Woods is a few acres of trees and shrubs that provide shade, oxygen, habitat for birds and other small animals, a critical green belt absorbing water during rains—water which*

*otherwise will cause flooding and erosion down the hill-- it offers all the beauties of nature for a stressful age. Those who walk in it, and observe it, find it quite wonderful. A biological inventory reveals, in fact, a great diversity of trees, shrubs and plants (see addendum I), as well as a variety of birds (including woodpeckers, hawks, owls and song birds). No green area is without non-native species today, and global warming is steadily changing the mix of plant life in all locales. The most "invasive" species is, of course, man-made concrete).*

**14. Given the shifting, ad hoc, and misleading arguments used by the Administration over several years, we are left with one logical conclusion: there is no coherent rationale for this lot. The official line, rather, appears as follows:**

*No matter what arguments are made by faculty, town, or students, we intend to cut down Redbud Woods and build a parking lot—EVEN IF we could find other ways to limit driving in the near future and over time; even if saving the woods would win us respect and admiration for its consistency with our rhetorical commitment to "sustainability," and to heeding the objections of those negatively affected; even if a large majority of faculty, students, townspeople, and alums oppose the destruction of the woods; even if it wins us very bad publicity and lowers donations and applications; even it makes us look very hypocritical and intellectually backward, NOTHING could convince us to give up this parking lot. We have planned it for years, and told the opponents for years that we intend to do it. We have made a few modifications and now we are done. We don't want to think about it anymore, and we are done listening to reasons to stop the construction. Once the administrators of a great university decide on a course of action, all resistance and argument must stop. Greatness means steadfastness in an original administrative decision, no matter what arguments come up later. We have the power, and being able to enforce our original decision to pave the woods outweighs every other value that might come from NOT paving it. The most important value to be gained here is protection of administrative prerogative.*

Throughout its aggressive campaign for this parking lot, the administration has failed to behave with the honor and fairness expected of academic institution like this. It has been disrespectful of the opponents—including both the city of Ithaca (which it has twice subjected to law suits to force its plan on a strongly opposed community), and its own faculty-- never giving serious consideration to their arguments. When reasoned and integrated position papers have been presented by the opposition, Cornell has refused to reconsider the paving, or respond to the alternative proposals and revelations of inaccurate statements. Instead, the administration has simply shifted its arguments to other grounds. It has continually made deliberately misleading and contradictory statements, and constantly shifted its rationale for building the lot. When a group of decision makers is confronted with strong opposition among the community, its own faculty experts, and its most idealistic and environmentally committed students, it should recognize that the original decision was deeply flawed. But throughout this painful process, the administration has displayed only rigidity and the repetition of narrow-gauged arguments about numbers of parking spaces. It has consistently refused to be pulled out of its parking-fixation into considerations of environmental impact, community relations, and the ambitious, highly creative alternative vision offered by the Redbud faculty, students, and community, a vision that has so much to offer this university.

Those who oppose the destruction of the woods and put forward this alternative vision to give meaning to Cornell's claims to leadership in environmental sustainability will not withdraw from this effort. Opposition to the parking lot and the narrow-gauge thinking that supports it will only

continue to grow, through teach-ins and publicity that will only become more determined if the administration insists on a violent confrontation to remove protesters. The horrible publicity and damage to Cornell's reputation should this action be taken will be a continuing disaster. Faculty who at this juncture are pledged to wholeheartedly support the West Campus intellectual goals and bring the preserved woods into their teaching would, if the woods were destroyed, be very bitter. The whole campus would be demoralized, and fundraising and faculty recruitment damaged. In fact, Cornell's weak commitment to environmental education has already caused faculty resignations. The next president will be walking into a poisonous situation with more third of the faculty deeply disappointed with the administration, soured on the west campus initiative, and much less willing to take on all the extra tasks the administration would like them to engage in, and alumni and potential donors disgusted with the university's hypocrisy. All these losses, far weightier for their multi-dimensional character, must be carefully considered as the fate of redbud woods is decided. Juxtaposed with the enormous positive commitment and creative energy of an aroused faculty and student body eager to propel the university toward real international leadership in sustainability, can a rational decision-maker really opt for bulldozing this woods?

Addendum I

**Redbud Woods Plant Species List, Spring 2005**

Black Cherry	<i>Prunus serotina</i>	Native, tree
Black Medic	<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	non-native
Black Walnut	<i>Juglans nigra</i>	Native, tree
Buckthorn	<i>Ramnus cathartica</i>	tree, invasive
Bull Thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	non-native
Butternut	<i>Juglans cinerea</i>	Native, tree
Celandine	<i>Chelidonium majus</i>	non-native;
Cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>	Native
Coltsfoot	<i>Tussilago farfara</i>	non-native: Europe
Common Blue Violet	<i>Viola sororia</i>	Native
Creeping Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	non-native
Daisy Fleabane	<i>Erigeron annuus</i>	Native
Dame's Rocket	<i>Hesperis matronalis</i>	Invasive
Dandelion	<i>Taraxium officinale</i>	non-native; Europe
Enchanter's Nightshade	<i>Circaea quadrisulcata</i>	Native
English Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>	non-native; invasive
Forget-me-nots	<i>Myosotis sylvatica</i>	non-native; Europe & Asia
Garlic Mustard	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>	non-native; Eurasian; invasive
Grape vine	<i>Vitis sp.</i>	Native
Green Dragon	<i>Arisaema dracontium</i>	Native
Hackberry	<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>	Native; locally scarce, tree
Herb Robert	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Native
Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera morrowi</i>	White to yellow flowers
Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera tatarica</i>	pink flowers, red berries, invasive
Hooked Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus recurvatus</i>	Native
Indian Strawberry	<i>Duchesnea indica</i>	non-native
Jumpseed	<i>Polygonum virginiana</i>	Native
Lily of the Valley	<i>Convallaria majalis</i>	non-native;
Moneywort	<i>Lysimachia nummularia</i>	non-native
Motherwort	<i>Leonurus cardiaca</i>	non-native
Mulberry	<i>Morus sp.</i>	Some sp. native, some not, tree
Multiflora Rose	<i>Rosa multiflora</i>	non-native; invasive
Nipplewort	<i>Lapsana communis</i>	non-native
Norway Maple	<i>Acer platanoides</i>	non-native, invasive, tree
Norway Spruce	<i>Picea abies</i>	non-native, tree
Orchard Grass	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	non-native
Pignut Hickory	<i>Carya glabra</i>	Native, tree
Poison Ivy	<i>Toxicodendron radicans</i>	Native
Privet	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	Non-native shrub, escape for cultivation
Redbud	<i>Cercis canadensis</i>	Naturalized, N. of its range, tree
Sedge	<i>Carex sp.</i>	one of the common sedges

Shagbark Hickory	<i>Carya ovata</i>	Native, tree
Tall Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	non-native
Thyme-leaved Speedwell	<i>Veronica serpyllifolia</i>	non-native; Europe & Asia
Tree of Heaven	<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>	non-native, tree
Virginia Creeper	<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>	Native
White Ash	<i>Fraxinus americana</i>	Native, tree
White Pine	<i>Pinus strobus</i>	Native, tree
Wild Garlic	<i>Allium canadense</i>	Native
Yellow Oak	<i>Quercus muhlenbergii</i>	Native; locally rare, tree
Burr Oak	<i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>	Native, tree