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March 9, 2007

DeKalb County Board of Commissioners
Manuel J. Maloof Center
1300 Commerce Drive, 6th Floor
Decatur, GA 30030

Dear Commissioners:

I have been asked by the Druid Hills Civic Association (DHCA) to evaluate and comment on the proposed “Emory Village Overlay District,” from the perspective of a Landscape Architect and a Historic Preservation Planner. My firm, The Jaeger Company, assisted the DHCA in the development of design guidelines for the Druid Hills Local Historic District in 1997, providing me with experience and an understanding of this area. In addition I have worked as a planning and design professional for almost 30 years.

This information has been arranged as follows: (1) **Cover Letter** - a two page summary of my findings; (2) **Supportive Graphics** - including three “section” views within Emory Village comparing the Overlay District proposal with the recommendations from the DHCA and a key sheet illustrating with “red lines” the location of sections; and (3) **Narrative Summary** – providing background information on the conclusions from the cover letter. Specifically, I would like to support the recommendations of the DHCA for the following reasons:

(1) **Historical Significance** - The historical significance of the Druid Hills and Emory University National Register Districts and the Druid Hills Local Historic District will be negatively impacted by the scale of new development proposed by the overlay district.

The proposal to allow 3 story buildings at the edges of Emory Village and the potential massing of such buildings will be inconsistent with the dominant patterns of scale in the adjacent historic and residential neighborhoods. The 4 story buildings proposed within central areas of the Emory Village and particularly the future buildings along North Decatur Road, east of Oxford Road, will visually compete with the Glen Memorial Church, lessening the landmark role this building provides to Emory Village.

Druid Hills as well as Emory University's historic districts are characterized by a mature hardwood forest which establishes the setting for Emory Village. Building to 4 story heights will alter this setting by visually blocking the surrounding tree canopy.

(2) **Public Participation and Consensus** - Plans to improve Emory Village have included strong elements of public involvement and consensus building, beginning as early as 2000 and culminating with the completion of the 2002 Plan. The agreements made as part of these planning processes between all of the interested parties, particularly the provision to limit building heights to 2 and 3 story buildings appears to have been changed without further involvement of the residents of the surrounding neighborhoods.

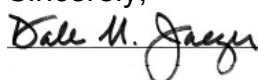
(3) **Rationale for Increasing the Scale** - The rationale to change the recommendations for height limitations from the 2002 plan to the 2006 proposed overlay district is based on arbitrary logic. One of two "guiding principles" of the updated 2006 Design Standards for Emory Village notes that "the scale must remain consistent with the historic development of the Village and supportive of the use of the environment by pedestrians." This proposed scale of 3-4 stories is not consistent with the Village's development pattern. The "historic development of the Village" has been primarily 1 story.

Also the increase in height does not support a greater "use of the environment by the pedestrians." Other statements made in support of the increased scale, have noted that it would be "very comfortable to pedestrians;" would be "comfortable, attractive, and feel appropriate to pedestrians and drivers;" and that "taller buildings" would not be "massed" or "continuous," precluding "any kind of cavern effect."

The attached graphics, Sections A-C all visually illustrate the contrary. The relationship a 6' tall person has to the 4 stories proposed in the overlay district as compared against the 3 story limitation clearly show that a pedestrian would be overwhelmed by the increased scale. Also building sites along North Decatur Road and Oxford Road as shown in the Sections A and C create a "cavern effect." Further, the massive walls of the 4 story option may not be necessarily lessened with design techniques, since there are no requirements for setbacks of the upper stories or the use of other scale-lessening details. These potential tools are only noted as "may" be used in the 2006 Design Standards.

In summary, the current overlay district proposes a scale of development which will negatively impact the historic setting within which Emory Village is located and will be out of scale with the pedestrian.

Sincerely,



Dale Jaeger, FASLA, AICP
Principal Landscape Architect & Preservation Planner