

## The Alliance to Improve Emory Village, Inc. – quarterly notes

### Key community meeting set for May - Be sure to be there! by Laretta Miller

We had terrific turnouts Saturday, January 26, and Saturday, March 9, at the Emory Presbyterian Church for major community meetings on the future of Emory Village. Thanks to all of you - Druid Hills residents, Emory University representatives, Emory Village merchants and property owners, and State and County political leaders. The occasions were workshops presented by the Alliance to Improve Emory Village (AIEV) and our consultants, Peter Drey and Company. A third community meeting will be held in early May (date, time and place to be announced). This is a very important meeting for everyone to attend. Our consultants will proffer a report in which they will present their findings and state their recommendations in several areas – prominent among these, the configuration of the major intersection, urban design (to include streetscape), uses (retail and residential possibilities), parking, and open spaces.

**AIEV is a “non-profit corporation to revitalize Emory Village by creating a safe, economically viable, walkable and compact mixed-use community that is compatible with and a resource to Emory University and the surrounding historic Druid Hills neighborhood.”** This is AIEV’s “mission.” The “stakeholders” are all those who will benefit from Emory Village’s success – the Village property owners, business owners and managers; Emory University faculty, staff and students; Clifton Corridor organizations, and YOU, the residents of the Druid Hills neighborhood.

A quick recap of AIEV’s activities – last fall, you were invited to attend workshops in which participants reviewed data, identified issues, and discussed strategic alternatives for the future of the Village. AIEV grew out of that experience and adopted the mission and goals developed in the workshops. The aims of the 2002 community meetings are to determine the best possible solutions and develop the Master Plan for Emory Village.

AIEV is fortunate to have as advisors Peter Drey and Company, consultants who have had wide experience in the planning and implementation of large and small “downtowns” and intersections. With their guidance, we reviewed three major considerations underlying the completed Plan. These are -

1. Retention of the historic neoclassical buildings.
2. Reclamation of elements from the 1930s façade.
3. Development of contemporary designs in a historic context.

We are not interested in recreating Emory Village as a theme park. New design elements will be evaluated and incorporated as appropriate. Certainly, we will avoid any bland institutional appearance. Zoning will be reviewed, and proposals for change made, if necessary. Many different commercial uses can be accommodated. Some limited residential development is also being weighed. A major issue will be setback requirements.

Perhaps the most important immediate issue is transportation. No one who lives or works in Druid Hills can be unaware of the substantial increase in traffic through the Village during the period 1993 to the present. Even small percentage increases have enormous ramifications. North Decatur Road at peak hours can be a tortuous, slow-moving stream of vehicles. The status quo is not an option. We face the challenge of whether or not the Master Plan should include redesign of crucial intersections within and surrounding the Village and what form any such proposals should take.

## We don't live in "Perfect," GA

There is no "perfect" solution to the situation confronting us. Every solution also involves sub-issues and complications. We know we can improve Emory Village, but how? What tradeoffs can we accept? When it comes to the intersection at the heart of the Village, which of the configurations under study will yield the most benefits and the least drawbacks? What compromises will permit the optimum solution? Are there so many advantages to one alternative as to overshadow any inconveniences? The accompanying chart, **INTERSECTION ALTERNATIVES –Comparative features, advantages and disadvantages** (on page x), describes three alternative designs of the intersection, together with perceived advantages and disadvantages. (The consultants' ongoing studies may produce some modifications to these alternatives. The May presentation will clarify any of these.) Alternative A (the Roundabout) was the most popular choice at the first two meetings. The "roundabout" concept is one many of us have met abroad; in recent years, it has been implemented successfully in parts of Florida and other states. Objections have been raised to the suggestion (see Alternatives A and B) that there be no left turn from north Oxford Road eastbound onto North Decatur. There are other ways to get there, but a left turn is the most obvious route. Again, we need to balance advantages and disadvantages.

The idea of including housing in the design of a mostly commercial district is also new to many of us, but "mixed use" does accord with the principles of the "New Urbanism" and the reconstruction of "downtowns" in many parts of the country. It would bring a "permanent" population to the Village. Expected benefits would include enhanced economic viability and safety.

To ensure you are part of the decision-making process, look for a DHCA "Community Connection" flyer coming soon to your mailbox and for outdoor signs and window posters in Emory Village. These will give the date, time and place for the crucial community meeting coming up in May.

# INTERSECTION ALTERNATIVES – Comparative features, advantages and disadvantages

## Alternative A: Roundabout

### Basic features –

- Institute a “road diet” along North Decatur Road by reducing travel lanes from 4 to 2 with intermittent turn lanes
- Install bike lanes, limited parallel parking and wider sidewalks along North Decatur Road
- Realign the north side of Oxford Road (towards the west); eliminate left turn onto N Decatur
- Reconfigure intersection by adding a one-lane circular “roundabout”
- Road diet will essentially “cap” the number of vehicles that use North Decatur Road on a daily basis

### Advantages –

- Creates a unique visual point for the community
- Improves traffic flow in the Village at non-peak hours
- Combined with the Lullwater roundabout (approval likely soon), slows traffic in the Village, thus making it more pedestrian friendly
- Creates a fairly direct pedestrian connection between Emory and the Village (non-signalized)
- Eliminates asphalt and creates an excellent opportunity for extending/expanding Emory’s green space
- Does not require significant land acquisition
- To some extent, can be tested “live” in advance of construction

### Disadvantages –

- Road diet may worsen traffic flow during peak hours
- Will require a little time for motorists to learn how to navigate a roundabout
- Access from North Oxford to North Decatur is limited to right turns
- Less workable area hampers creation of long-term consolidated parking in the rear
- Roundabouts are relatively rare in Atlanta and may face opposition from constituents and/or public officials
- Can not be implemented without a road diet

## Alternative B: Road Diet (4-way Intersection)

### Basic features –

- Institute a “road diet” along North Decatur Road by reducing travel lanes from 4 to 2 with intermittent turn lanes
- Install bike lanes, limited parallel parking and wider sidewalks along North Decatur Road
- Realign the north side of Oxford Road (towards the west); eliminate left turn onto N Decatur
- Reconfigure 5-legged intersection into a traditional 4-legged signalized intersection
- Road diet will essentially “cap” the number of vehicles that use North Decatur Road on a daily basis

## Advantages –

- Conventional intersection is easy to understand
- Improves traffic flow in the Village at non-peak hours
- Combined with the Lullwater roundabout (approval likely soon), slows traffic in the Village, thus making it more pedestrian friendly
- Creates a fairly direct pedestrian connection between Emory and the Village (non-signalized)
- Eliminates asphalt and creates an excellent opportunity for extending/expanding Emory’s green space
- Does not require significant land acquisition
- To some extent, can be tested “live” in advance of construction
- Of the three, easiest to implement politically (if necessary, can be implemented without a road diet)
- Either roundabout (Alternative A) or south Oxford leg (Alternative C) can be phased in at a later date

## Disadvantages –

- Road diet may worsen traffic flow during peak hours
- Does not create a unique aesthetic for the Village
- Traffic stops for pedestrians, but has the tendency to “speed” to try to make the next light
- Less workable area hampers creation of long-term consolidated parking in the rear
- Access from North Oxford to North Decatur is limited to right turns

## Alternative C: Oxford Realignment

### Basic features –

- Institute a “road diet” along North Decatur Road by reducing travel lanes from 4 to 2 with intermittent turn lanes
- Install bike lanes, limited parallel parking and wider sidewalks along North Decatur Road
- Realign the north side of Oxford Road (towards the west) to create a signalized “T” intersection
- Realign the south side of Oxford Road (towards the east) to create a signalized “T” intersection
- Road diet will essentially “cap” the number of vehicles that use North Decatur Road on a daily basis

### Advantages –

- Having two separate signals creates a “main street” section in the heart of the Village
- Combined with the Lullwater roundabout (approval likely soon), slows traffic in the Village, thus making it more pedestrian friendly
- Creates a fairly direct pedestrian connection between Emory and the Village (non-signalized)
- Eliminates asphalt and creates an excellent opportunity for extending/expanding Emory’s green space
- Creates significant development opportunities in the long-term on the south side of North Decatur (including best opportunity and access for consolidated parking in rear)
- Creates signalized access to Emory via Oxford (best alternative for Emory vehicular access)
- If necessary, can be implemented without a road diet

### Disadvantages –

- Road diet may worsen traffic flow during peak hours

- Significantly changes the historic character of the Village – historic buildings lost in the long-term
- Traffic stops for pedestrians, but has the tendency to “speed” to try to make the next light
- Of the three, worst pedestrian access to the Village from Emory (requires mid-block crossing)
- Most development will be on one side of the street only (south side)
- Requires significant land acquisition (and potential court challenges to condemnation)
- New Oxford Road leg (south leg) faces significant grade issues
- Short-term access issues relative to structures on Oxford Road (south of North Decatur Road)
- Most difficult alternative to test “live”