

Proposed
Emory Village Revitalization
Zoning Code and Design Standards
March 2006

Background and Context

The Alliance to Improve Emory Village is non-profit 501(c)3 organization comprised of representatives from Druid Hills, Emory University and business and property owners in Emory Village. The Mission of the AIEV is: *Create a safe, compact, walkable and economically viable mixed-use community that is a resource and asset to the surrounding historic neighborhoods and Emory University.* The effort to revitalize Emory Village and the origin of AIEV are the result of a series of charettes conducted in 2000 by the Georgia Tech City Planning Program and the Atlanta Chapter of the Urban Land Institute. The Mission of AIEV was written by the community at those charettes. AIEV has formed to develop and implement a plan for the revitalization of Emory Village.

The Revitalization Plan was prepared by Peter Drey and Associates in 2001-2002 with significant public input and widespread community support. Funding for the Plan was provided by Emory University, DeKalb County and the Druid Hills Civic Association. A copy of the plan is available on the AIEV website www.emoryvillage.org. In 2003, the Atlanta Regional Commission reviewed the Emory Village Revitalization Plan and designated Emory Village a *Livable Center*. With this LCI designation, DeKalb County and AIEV applied for LCI Implementation Funds. In 2004 ARC provided approximately \$2 million to design and construct streetscape improvements along North Decatur and Oxford roads. DeKalb County is required to provide a 20% match to these funds. In 2004 EDAW and Associates began to develop construction documents. These design documents will be completed in 2006. Before construction begins later this year, three final steps must occur: the construction design documents must be approved by Georgia DOT, some additional right-of-way must be acquired and the project must be bid to a general contractor. AIEV believes that construction can begin in the fall of 2006 and be completed in 2007.

Why a New Zoning District is Needed

All of the work to date has focused on the “public space” – the streets and sidewalks in the public right-of-way owned by DeKalb County. However, to attain the community’s vision for Emory Village, change and redevelopment must also occur on private property. Various local ordinances determine how a property can be used. The current zoning regulations in the Village segregate residential from commercial development. Residential development is not currently permitted to be built in Emory Village. To permit the types of development desired by the community and expressed in the Revitalization Plan, DeKalb County zoning regulations must be changed.

Most of Emory Village is currently zoned C-1. This district permits many uses that are not appropriate for a mixed use community. For example, C-1 zoning is typically applied to strip commercial highways like Memorial Drive and many portions of Buford

Highway. C-1 permits a wide range of commercial uses from convenience stores, gas stations, fast food restaurants and motels. C-1 zoning does not regulate design. It permits large signs, garish materials, and a building form that is more oriented to the automobile driver than the pedestrian. For all of these reasons AIEV has been preparing a revised zoning district and new design guidelines for Emory Village.

Process for Preparation and Adoption

AIEV established a committee comprised of Board members, other members of the community and consultants to guide the preparation of these documents. General guidance and direction were derived from the Revitalization Plan. The preparation of the attached documents has been conducted over the past two years in an inclusive manner to incorporate diverse perspectives. Several representative business and property owners who have specific financial interests as well as interested neighborhood representatives have been consulted and included in the decision-making process. Professional planners with Peter Drey and Associates, Tunnel Spangler Walsh and Town Plan Atlanta have been consulted and have drafted these documents. In addition, a zoning attorney who wrote DeKalb County's current zoning ordinance has reviewed the documents and consulted with AIEV. Finally, the AIEV Board of Directors has reviewed the drafts and believes they are ready for a broader review. The process for moving forward with the revised zoning regulations and design guidelines is as follows:

- Copies of the draft documents are being sent to property owners, the Druid Hills Civic Association and the DeKalb County Planning Department for review and comment.
- Copies are also posted on the AIEV web site www.emoryvillage.org. Individuals may send an e-mail to AIEV with any questions or comments they may have.
- After meeting and discussing the documents with these organizations and individuals, AIEV will go back to its consultants and attorney to prepare final draft documents.
- AIEV will review the final drafts and provide copies to all property owners and interested parties.
- AIEV will submit the final drafts to DeKalb County for adoption. They will be reviewed by the Planning Department, the Planning Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission, the County Attorney and the County Commission
- The County will advertise and hold at least two public hearing before the documents can be adopted.

Application of the Regulations

It is important to understand how these regulations will be implemented. AIEV is proposing a zoning overlay for a distinct and defined area. This is similar to the Historic District overlay that exists for Druid Hills. The properties within the Emory Village Overlay District may continue to operate their businesses and homes as they currently are operating under the C-1 (base) zoning district. No current business will be forced out of business or forced to change their current structures to conform to the new regulations. The Overlay regulations will apply when a property is redeveloped. If a building is demolished, the building that replaces it must comply with the new regulations. For example, the BP gas station is a permitted use in a C-1 zoning district, but under the new

regulations a gas station will not be permitted to be built. Therefore, if the BP buildings were demolished the new regulations would become effective and a gas station could not be rebuilt. In the meantime BP may continue to operate as a gas station and may continue to maintain its buildings and property. The overlay regulations will apply any time that a development permit (construction, demolition, clearing and grading and alteration) is needed.

Consideration for Reviewing the Documents

When reading the documents, it is important to consider the interaction of several documents. The Revitalization Plan provides general guidance for the creation of subsequent regulations. The current C-1 permits some land uses and prohibits others. The Emory Village Zoning Overlay permits most retail uses permitted in C-1, prohibits some land uses currently permitted in C-1 and permits other land uses that are currently prohibited under C-1. Finally the Design Guidelines will be applicable to all new construction and remodeling projects. To understand the proposed regulations, it is necessary to consider the combined impact of each regulation.

Building Height

AIEV has carefully considered many issues with regard to the proposed regulations. Parking, building setbacks, lot coverage, permitted uses, and design standards are all important issues, but building height was the most difficult issue to resolve. All of the buildings currently in the Village are one story. After careful consideration AIEV believes that in some portions of Emory Village building heights should be no higher than 4 stories. A story is defined as between 9 and 12 feet, except the ground floor which must be between 12 and 18 feet. Here are some of the reasons and factors that explain why AIEV believes these height limitations are necessary:

- North Decatur Road is 100 feet wide from building to building. The maximum building height is slightly more than half of that distance. So the ratio of height to separation is very comfortable to pedestrians.
- The actual number of sites where a multistory building can be built is limited by floodplain, stream bank corridors and historic preservation. There only 4 possible sites in the Village for multi-story buildings.
- These sites are broken up and none are continuous. The sites don't line-up exactly across the street from one another – they are offset from another and preclude any kind of cavern effect. Therefore the taller buildings aren't massed and continuous.
- Massive walls can and will be prevented in the design guidelines. The design guidelines will require design techniques and features to ensure the scale is appropriate. For example cornices, windows, balconies, off-setting facades, changes in materials --- all of these can be used in a way to ensure the buildings relate to the human scale, and prevent large expanses of blank walls.
- Design professionals such as architects, planners and landscape architects were consulted and participated throughout the process. These professionals who understand and work with proportions and scale everyday, have advised AIEV

that 4 stories is comfortable, attractive and will feel appropriate to pedestrians and drivers.

- Retailers and restaurateurs have told us that adding a fourth story is important to creating a critical mass of customers and patrons. With more housing units, Emory Village can attract a broader range of retailers. One of the critical problems for retailers today is their over-dependence on the student market. Consequently in the summer, some businesses close. The difference between three and four stories is crucial for a strong and diverse retail market.
- A lot of money and effort has gone into designing the streetscapes, but the real improvement comes when private landowners redevelop their property. Redevelopment won't happen overnight, but it would be a shame if these streetscape improvements are built and no redevelopment occurs. Redeveloping in Emory Village is a unique challenge. There are floodplains and stream bank buffers which limit development near Peavine Creek. The sites in Emory Village are irregular shaped and create certain inefficiencies that limit the size of buildings and add to the cost. A few structures are historic and they must be protected and honored. Parking structures must be built and the cost incurred for these structures must be spread across the income producing buildings. Limiting the building heights to less than 4 stories will reduce the number of residential units and could threaten the immediate and long-term economic viability of Emory Village. With fewer residential units it will become a much more difficult deal and Emory Village will not attract as wide a variety of developers. If the profits are marginal, builders will start looking for where they can cut corners and we will not attain the design quality we all want.
- Every housing unit built near the CDC or Emory or the hospitals, is a one less car trip through neighborhood streets. In the future the Clifton Corridor Transportation Management Association shuttles will serve the Village residents.
- In Druid Hills there is predominantly one form of housing: a single-family house with a yard. There currently very limited opportunities for people who would like to remain the neighborhood, but can no longer maintain a yard or don't want a yard. There are very few opportunities for younger buyers to move into the neighborhood. There are very limited options for people that need to be on one floor, people that don't want the maintenance of a house and people who don't want to drive for all of their needs after they reach 80 years old.

Please review the proposed regulations and design guidelines carefully. AIEV will be happy to discuss and answer and questions.