

Record of Public Meeting on 7.25.07

John Maximuk of the Livable Communities Coalition: Opened the meeting by welcoming the audience to the fifth meeting. Reviewed the schedule of meetings to that point: the March 14th meeting that began the process by discussing Guiding Principles; the April 25th meeting that discussed Site Inventory and Analysis; the May 31st meeting that discussed the Public Realm Framework; the June 27th meeting which featured the presentation of Property Owner Plans; and now the July 25th meeting, which would feature the Draft Master Plan.

There will be three ways for people to submit questions: by coming to the microphones to ask questions in person; by writing them down on index cards and submitting them; or by submitting questions by e-mail or through the website.

The next meeting will be the final meeting of this public planning process, at which would be presented the Final Master Plan. However, the larger planning process will not end at that meeting. Any ideas that emerge from this process must go through all ordinary county review processes. There will be no automatic approvals.

Mr. Maximuk then introduced Commissioner Kathie Gannon.

Commissioner Gannon: Has been hearing a lot of questions wondering, Where do we go from here? This process had been focused on keeping the existing quality of life, and on improving that quality of life. What this process is trying to do is lay a ground level framework to then see the property owner proposals on top of that.

Many people have asked, Should we be meeting with Sembler and other property owners individually? Please don't do that – it's too early in the process. People should get their questions out in the open as part of this process, and work through this process before they go to Sembler.

Commissioner Gannon then introduced Commissioner Jeff Rader.

Commissioner Rader: Has been seeing a growing anxiety in the community, people wanting to know specific plans. People are seeing a part of the process that the community doesn't normally get to participate in. Most proposals that come up for rezoning are already a done deal. In this case, the idea was to hold off on reviewing individual proposals until a framework was in place. If things seem incomplete, it's because it is early in the process.

Need to hear people to talking about what specific elements and amenities they want to see, whether it is a senior center, a police precinct, a new swimming pool, or something else.

Also have been many questions about the traffic numbers. The main traffic study being done as part of the Development of Regional Impact (DRI) process should be done by next time, which will give concrete traffic numbers to discuss.

Hopes people will listen and absorb, and will offer feedback to commissioners, to community organizations. Have organized a group of volunteers with professional experience with development issues – architects, landscape architects, planners, engineers – who have agreed to act as resources to the community. If anyone has technical expertise to offer, please contact the commissioner’s offices.

Question from audience: Would you accept a developer on the committee?

Commissioner Rader: Are you a resident of this area?

Questioner: Yes.

Commissioner Rader: Then sure. We are an open access process.

Commissioner Rader than introduced Alex Garvin.

Alex Garvin:

Who has been to these meetings before? [Hands raised.]

Who is here for the first time? [Hands raised.]

I urge everyone to visit the project website – we have posted there records of every meeting and all presentations that have been made at those meetings.

Thank you to everyone who has written in. We have learned a number of things from the comments that people have written in that we might otherwise never have known. For example, a biologist from Emory wrote in to tell us that part of Kittredge Park contains a section of native, untouched forest that includes a rare plant species, called the star vine, that must be protected. We would never have known this if we hadn’t been told, and you will see that we have incorporated this information into our plans.

A common question we have received is, How will this affect my neighborhood? Hopefully, by the end of this meeting, you should have a good sense of the answer to that question.

[Slide 1]

The plans we will be presenting tonight are not final. We will be taking your feedback and making revisions. At the next meeting, we will present a revised version of the proposed master plan, and that will be the final presentation of this process.

In addition to these public presentations, we have also been meeting with the Georgia Department of Transportation, the DeKalb Department of Transportation, MARTA, Emory University, DeKalb Planning Department, property owners, and community leaders.

[Slide 2]

This is a picture of your public realm as it currently exists, and it is in a deplorable state. This is Kittredge Park – it's hard to get to, you can't walk around in it, and it's difficult to use most of it.

[Slide 3]

That's not good enough; it isn't the asset that it could be, and it isn't being taken care of. There are no paths that go through there, and to visit a lot of the park, you have to fight your way through underbrush. There's also a lot of invasive species in there that aren't being managed.

[Slide 4]

Now, I mentioned to you that someone had explained to us that there is a unique, native forest here, which contains the rare star vine. This map shows where that forest is, and also the riparian zone around it, both of which are important to protect.

You can also see the stream that extends out from Kittredge Park, and the lake that is currently in the middle of the Park at Briarcliff. But the park is separated from both of those by a barbed wire fence.

[Slide 5]

So our first proposal is to expand the public realm by extending the park along the stream and encompassing the lake, and continuing out to Briarcliff Road. We are proposing a series of trails that will connect through the park and provide places for people to walk through the park. They would also run alongside the stream and down to the lake and beyond.

[Slide 6]

How many people here have visited the lake? [A few hands raised.] Not many. This is a picture of the lake. You can see that it's being fed by these pipes, which

are sharp and rusting. But you can see that even so, there are children there, and ducks and geese.

[Slide 7]

This could be a great attraction. It could look something like this – no pipes, planted sides, and now a better place for children, ducks, and geese.

[Slide 8]

How many of you have visited Kittredge Park. [Hands up.] That's more than the lake, but it's still not enough. I've said that it hasn't been taken care of. But if you make investments in it, I think it could look something like this.

[Slide 9]

There are improvements you can make to Kittredge Park that could make a big difference and turn it into a real attraction. They're simple improvements – better trails, taking care of the landscaping – but they could make a big difference. Of course, those do cost money, and we're going to talk about how to pay for them later in the presentation.

[Slide 10]

We're also proposing to create park drives alongside the park so that you can have access to it. As you can see, we're proposing to have (from left to right), a building; then a sidewalk; then parallel parking, with every few spaces separated by a street tree planted in a tree pit that can absorb stormwater; then two lanes of traffic; then another parallel parking lane; then a protected bike lane, and then another sidewalk; and then the park. This would be a 60-foot street – that's 60 feet for cars, parking, sidewalks, and everything.

[Slide 11]

We're also looking at creating regulations to make sure that whatever is built next to the park doesn't intrude into it by being too tall, or casting too large a shadow. But we're still in the early stages with that – we'll have more concrete proposals at the next meeting.

[Slide 12]

So this is what the park drive would look like. You can see, there are the buildings, sidewalks, bike lanes, street trees, and so forth. I think this would create a very different public realm from anything that you have here right now.

[Slide 13]

You can see, these proposals would create a new public realm extending all the way from Kittredge Park out along the stream, past the lake, to Briarcliff Road. So now let's turn our attention to Briarcliff Road and North Druid Hills Road and the kind of public realm we can create along those.

[Slide 14]

A lot of you have talked about the traffic along Briarcliff Road and North Druid Hills Road, and how many traffic accidents you have along there. As we've discussed, there are some regional factors causing all that traffic. But another reason is all the curb cuts along those two roads leading to the businesses that line them. As a result, you have cars turning out of traffic to get into those, which slows down the flow of traffic, and creates dangerous driving conditions.

[Slide 15]

We're proposing to eliminate those curb cuts and create new, reconfigured boulevards along Briarcliff and North Druid Hills Roads. Moving from left to right, you can see there's a building; then a generous sidewalk, not like what you have now; then a protected bike lane; then a planting strip, with street trees; then you have a service lane, and that would have one lane of parallel parking and one lane for local traffic; after that would be a wide median with more street trees; then you would have five lanes of traffic, like you have now, with two lanes in each direction and a turning lane in the middle; and then you would have the same thing on the other side – the median, local traffic, parking, planting strip, protected bike lane, sidewalk, and building.

[Slide 16]

Here's the same thing in section. This shows you a couple of things. First, you've separated the local traffic from the regional traffic with the service roads. Drivers would only be able to reach the curb cuts from the local service road, so you wouldn't have to worry about them turning across traffic and blocking people and causing accidents. Also, you can see that we've created a place for buses to pull out of traffic for a bus stop. When that happens, you eliminate a few parking places, and people can walk across to catch the bus. This means that stopped buses don't stop traffic – they pull out, drop off and pick up passengers, and then pull back into traffic.

[Slide 17]

And again, we're looking at regulations to make sure new buildings don't overpower the public realm. But again, we're still playing with that, and we'll be back with specifics next time.

I realize all this may be a little hard to picture, so we're going to show you a rendering.

[Slide 18]

Here's a picture of North Druid Hills Road now. [Laughter; audience members point out that traffic is unusually light.] I took that picture at 11:30 in the morning. It's true, I have seen traffic much heavier than that, but that's all I saw when I took the picture. Anyway, as I say, this is North Druid Hills Road now. You can see the Bellsouth Tower in the distance, and you can see all those curb cuts.

[Slide 19]

This is what North Druid Hills Road could look like. You can still see the Bellsouth Tower in the background, but now you see there is an entirely new public realm. There are safe, pleasant places to walk and to bicycle. There are street trees. The curb cuts in the background now lead into the service road, not into main artery. This is a very different kind of place.

[Slide 20]

We're also proposing a couple other kinds of streets. This is what we're proposing for a commercial or retail street. Again, working left to right, you have buildings, then a broad sidewalk; then a protected bike lane; then angled parking, and every five cars or so you have a tree pit with a street tree; then four lanes of traffic; then another lane of angled parking; and then a sidewalk on the other side and a building. That's 110 feet from building to building.

[Slide 21]

That would look something like this. Again, a very different kind of environment from what you have here, and a place where I think people would get out and walk because it's a place worth walking in.

[Slide 22]

And the last type of street would be a primarily residential street. This is much narrower. From left to right, you have a building; a sidewalk; a protected bike lane; parallel parking with periodic street trees; two lanes of traffic; another lane of parallel parking; a sidewalk, and then another building.

[Slide 23]

That would look something like this. Places to walk, a place to bike, street trees, and a pleasant, high-quality public realm. So, those are the types of roads we're proposing be laid out in this area. Now, let's look at where these new roads would go.

[Slide 24]

This is the street grid you currently have.

[Slide 25]

And this is currently the interchange with I-85.

[Slide 26]

The first set of improvements we're recommending are improvements to the interchange with I-85. This would include a new exit lane, or possibly two, from I-85 leading to Executive Park Drive; elimination of the "bump-out" by what is now the Sun Trust Bank, which would give additional lanes onto North Druid Hills; and the last comes from the suggestion by the elderly gentleman who said to us two months ago, "You have a new exit from I-85, but what about a new entrance?" And as you can see, we've listened, and we're recommending a new road that would lead to the I-85 access road.

[Slide 27]

These are the improvements that, as far as we can tell, are the most likely to happen first. They include the new exits and entrances to I-85; creating boulevards along North Druid Hills Road and Briarcliff Road; a widened Sheridan Road between Executive Park Drive and Briarcliff Road; and then a grid of roads through the properties that the Sembler Company is looking at – the Park at Briarcliff and the school board property. That grid includes park drives along Kittredge Park and the park extensions bordering the stream and the lake.

[Slide 28]

And then right after that, if not concurrent with it, Executive Park is looking to redevelop, and that creates the opening to create these additional roads.

[Slide 29]

Then, sometime in the future, there are other properties around here that will be redeveloping. I don't know when – it could be five years, it could be 25 years – but at some point, Loehmann's Plaza is going to redevelop, and Children's Healthcare will redevelop, and Target will redevelop. When that happens, that will create the opportunity to build these new roads and complete the network, connecting the roads to one another in all four quadrants.

[Slide 30]

When you put it all together, it looks like this. As you can see, the major components we've been discussing are all there. You have the expanded Kittredge Park with the stream and the lake. There's the two boulevards of North Druid Hills

Road and Briarcliff Road that make the X; there's a version of the Loop; and there's the grid network.

[Slide 31]

You may remember this map from the presentation in April. These are your current sidewalks – it isn't even a sidewalk system. It's discontinuous, there are gaps, it stops and starts.

[Slide 32]

Once the whole system of roads is built, this will be your sidewalk system, because, as you saw, all of these roads have sidewalks along them. You will be able to walk anywhere you want.

[Slide 33]

This is your only bike lane in the study area. It starts in front of Loehmann's Plaza on Briarcliff Road, and it ends about a quarter-mile down the road, at no place in particular. This is just a painted lane on the street, and whenever I'm on Briarcliff Road, I see cars and buses and trucks all driving on the bike lane. I do not see bikers using it.

[Slide 34]

This is what your new bike network would look like once the whole grid system is built. Every street has a bike lane along it, and you will not have cars or buses or trucks driving in the bike lanes because these are all protected bike lanes, with a lane of parking separating them from traffic. That means that you or your children or your grandchildren can safely ride anywhere in this neighborhood.

[Slide 35]

We've also talked about the lack of convenient mass transit here, and many people have pointed out that you have to have much better mass transit access here, especially if you're looking at significant redevelopment. After talking with MARTA, we've identified an express bus loop that could serve this area. Our understanding is that the Atlanta Regional Commission has studied having an express bus on Buford Highway. What we're proposing is to have an express bus from Lindbergh Station that goes along Sidney Marcus Boulevard and Buford Highway, then turns right down North Druid Hills Road, makes a right at the intersection and goes down Briarcliff Road and Clifton Road to Emory and the CDC, then comes back up and goes along the right of way of the Seaboard Coast Rail Line, then back up Piedmont Road to Lindbergh Station. This would create quick, direct connections to Emory and CDC, and quick access to MARTA at Lindbergh Station.

[Slide 36]

We've also been looking at creating a series of regulations for this area. One of the things we've discussed is the enormous amount of impervious pavement in the study area. [Note: See Public Presentation II, especially slide 51.] These parking lots are private property. But they are essentially part of the public realm, they are

open to the public. So one thing that we're developing is a set of regulations for permeable surfaces and tree cover for parking lots. Currently, the parking lots here look like this – barren, paved surfaces and very few trees.

[Slide 37]

We think that the parking lots could look more like this – landscaping, real trees, and pervious surfaces.

[Slide 38]

We're also developing regulations for the size of buildings along property edges that back up to existing residential private property, to make sure that new development doesn't overwhelm existing residents. As with the others, this is still something we're working on, and we'll be back next time with specific proposals.

[Slide 39]

By now, I'm sure one of the questions on everyone's mind is, How do you pay for all of this? Will I have to pay higher taxes? My answer is, you can pay for all of this, and no, you will not have to pay higher taxes.

First, I want to make a distinction between two types of costs – there are capital costs, which is the money it costs to build new infrastructure like roads and parks and sidewalks, and there are maintenance and operations costs, to do things like pay for people to pick up the trash, clean the street, repair street lights, and so forth.

I'll deal with capital costs first. It is possible to pay for capital costs, without new taxes, because new development brings in new real estate taxes for the county, because the redeveloped property is worth more and thus throws off more taxes. Normally, that would just go into the general fund and be spent anywhere. But it is also possible to capture those additional tax dollars and redirect them back to the area where they come from.

The idea is to take advantage of that tax revenue ahead of time, so that you can make the investments you need, and then use the tax revenues to pay off the cost of those investments. So you create a Tax Allocation District, or TAD – this is what the City of Atlanta has created to pay for the improvements to the Beltline Emerald Necklace. First you establish the boundaries of a district where you're going to direct your investments, and where you expect to generate additional real estate tax revenues. The county government continues to receive the same amount of real estate tax revenue that it already does. But any additional tax revenue is directed back into the TAD a set number of years – say, 25 years. Then, to raise funds for investments, the TAD can issue bonds against that projected revenue, use the bonds to pay for capital improvements, and then use the additional tax revenue to pay off the bondholders.

Determining how much money you can raise through a TAD here, and what all these improvements will cost, is a whole other process. We'll be back with some rough estimates next time, but a TAD requires an in-depth study. But if you look at

the number of property owners who are looking to redevelop here – Sembler, and Executive Park, and the Pattnis – then you’re talking about a great deal of new tax revenue that could be used for these improvements.

[Slide 40]

These are the types of capital costs I’m talking about – streets, bike lanes, trees, park improvements.

[Slide 41]

The other type of cost is maintenance and operations costs. For this, we can create a Community Improvement District, or CID. In a CID, the commercial property owners in a given area agree to pay an additional surcharge on their real estate taxes, and that money is used by the CID to pay for security personnel, workers to pick up the trash and sweep the streets, funds to repair benches and sidewalks, money to prune and water the trees and plants. This is something that is used all over the country – in most places, it’s called a Business Improvement District, or BID – and in many parts of the Atlanta area.

[Slide 42]

Taken together, I think these proposals present an opportunity to create an entirely new public realm for this area, one that is more attractive, safer to walk and to bike, more environmentally friendly, and a more pleasant place to live. I’m sure you have lots of questions and comments and thoughts to share, so I think we should open up the floor to questions.

Questions

Q: You’ve gone into a lot of detail about ways to come up with the funding to pay for these things, and it sounds like there’s going to be a lot more studying to be done. Will the website and the e-mails continue with this project after the Quad Study is done?

Alex Garvin: We will continue to update the website – this presentation will be posted, along with notes from this meeting, and the next presentation and notes will be posted as well.

Addendum [added post-meeting]: Alex Garvin & Associates will continue to run and update the website through the end of the Quad Study. After the Quad Study ends, it has not yet been determined how the planning efforts will proceed, or who might take over the website if Alex Garvin & Associates is not involved with planning efforts once the Quad Study is concluded.

Q: I served on the Board of Education for a number of years – I helped create this school [Kittredge Magnet School]. I’m concerned about the price that the school board is proposing to sell that property for, and I’m concerned about what will happen to the stadium. I think this property is worth at least \$100 million. This

project that you're talking about is a beautiful project, but I'm concerned about what's going to happen to the children.

Kathie Gannon: Is there anyone here from the school board who would like to respond? [No response.] No? We urge all of you to share your concerns with the school board – they control this property, and if you have concerns about that, you should let them know.

Q: Will Sembler's residential development look at housing for the elderly and people with disabilities?

AG: The public realm that we're talking about should be universally accessible. So far as the housing is concerned, my understanding is that the arrangement between the Housing Authority and the Sembler company includes a requirement for housing for the elderly.

Q: I am a part of the young community here, and this is just ridiculous. What happens to us when all of this construction comes in? What happens beyond this? I saw that in your picture of the shopping street you had a Pier One Imports. Well, what about the little Indian stores that are already here? Are there going to be places for authentic stores instead of national chains? They're all pretty pictures, but this isn't my home anymore. It's a shopping mall.

AG: To the degree we can provide for "authentic stores," I hope they can exist, but that's not really something you can put into a plan. I would hope there would be room for "authentic stores" in the new developments that people are proposing. You can't avoid new construction. I would hope you can do a phasing plan so that there would be parts of the public realm in place before new construction for redevelopment comes in. Also, without redevelopment, there's no way to pay for a new public realm.

Jay Cunningham, DeKalb School Board member for District 5: I just wanted to say that I am here listening and trying to get an understanding of this process. I don't have anything to tell you about this property, but I am here listening.

Q: We need to consider these proposals in a larger context. This proposal could be advanced at any one of a number of other places in Central DeKalb. This is a bigger problem than just here. In DeKalb, we need to think about planning on a larger scale.

We also need to be thinking about the aging of the baby boomers. I don't want to be driving when I'm in my 80s, and I don't want some of these other people to be driving when they're in their 80s. We need modern transit opportunities. We should broaden the CID concept, which is a great concept, to pay for a larger network of transit.

Also, as we age, our housing needs are going to change. We need housing for seniors.

And our housing opportunities are going to need to consider the children who can't afford to live in central DeKalb.

AG: I have an agreement, a disagreement, and a question. I agree – this type of planning does need to be done for the rest of DeKalb County. But that's not what we were asked to do. My disagreement is that this could be anywhere. Kittredge Park, the star vine, that intersection – those are all unique to this area. My question for you is, What do you think we could do to the plan to allow for senior housing?

Q: We should have regulations that allow residential over retail.

AG: That's certainly something we can do.

Q: I live in the Sheffield Glen townhouses, which is the development that butts up against Sembler's property. I was at a DOT meeting that talked about improvements to the intersection of LaVista and Briarcliff – how will that tie in with the boulevard you're talking about? Where does the boulevard end? What's going to happen to all that traffic? Also, people here should look at other Sembler projects and see what they've done there.

AG: For the boulevard, we can only extend it as far as the boundaries of the study area. Beyond that, it's going to be up to DeKalb County to decide. What I hope would happen is that this will be extended to other parts of the county. I'd be happy to see it extended from here to Stone Mountain – that would be a success. But as of now, it stops at the end of the Park at Briarcliff.

Jeff Rader: However, I want to emphasize that although that's where this study ends, the traffic study that is being done will extend well beyond that, and it will include LaVista and Briarcliff.

Q: I live beyond the boundaries of the study area you're describing. How will I get my bike to these bike lanes? How will we fit in that big boulevard you showed? And how will we get across all those lanes of regional traffic?

AG: First, if you're trying to bike outside this study area, you're taking your life into your hands riding on these roads. I hope that they'll extend this bicycle network elsewhere, but it takes time for that to build up. In Copenhagen, they've been developing a bike network for 70 years, and they now have a network that goes everywhere in the city.

Second, based on our discussions with people, and our assessment, we think we can fit all of that in.

And third, we need to develop a civil society where bikers are respected. In Copenhagen, the bicycle riders are respected. Here, I think that's something people will need to learn. It may require a set of officers from the CID to enforce the law.

Q: Looking at that slide about the TIF with the timeline [slide 39], it looks like it takes a lot of time, and it looks like the initial sums are small. You mentioned that the city of Atlanta is doing a TAD for the Beltline – it took them over a year to get that passed, and I still don't think they're getting any money out of that. If development comes quickly and the money comes slowly, how are you going to pay for all these improvements ahead of the development? And how do you know that the school board is going to support this TAD? They haven't supported this in the past.

AG: First of all, I think DeKalb can do a TAD much quicker than the city of Atlanta. Second, there has to be an intimate relationship between infrastructure and allowable density. You shouldn't have that density without the infrastructure to support it, and you can't build that infrastructure without the TAD. So you can't have development without the TAD, because otherwise you don't have money to pay for infrastructure, so it wouldn't get rezoned.

Third, this is one instance where the school board is going to have to support the TAD, because they're trying to sell a piece of property – this one – and that sale, I'm sure, is conditional upon the property getting rezoned. If it doesn't get the rezoned, then they won't get the money from the sale. And if they don't support the TAD, then the property won't be rezoned. So I think in this instance, they will support it.

Q: It look like you're going to have to raise our taxes a lot to pay for all of this. Can you grandfather in people who already live here so they don't have to have their taxes raised?

JR: The property taxes for single-family homes is frozen in DeKalb – that's not going to change with this proposal. A TAD does not require an increase at the tax rate. The school board property currently produces no taxes. The Park at Briarcliff produces relatively low taxes because that property is underutilized compared to what you could have there. So just the Sembler company properties would probably see a substantial rise in tax revenues if they were redeveloped. The new tax dollars come from the rise in property values, not from a rise in the tax rate.

Q: Is this a done deal? Has the Park at Briarcliff been acquired?

AG: Nothing is a done deal. But my understanding is that the Park at Briarcliff property has been acquired.

Q: I have a question for the audience about the Sembler project. Does anybody want it?

[Shouts of "No" from the audience.]

Q: What we want is to be left alone.

Q: Can you extend this study down to Toco Hills.

AG: Nothing would give me more pleasure. I'd love to do a plan for all of DeKalb County. But someone would have to bring us in to do that.

Q: I see high density development as a response to urban sprawl. But how do you make sure all of this is open to the public?

AG: These proposals would open up Kittredge Park, the stream, and the lake to the public.

Q: You talked about regulations on impervious surfaces for parking lots. Can you do anything about impervious surfaces on roofs?

AG: We will look into putting that in the regulations, and we are studying having some kind of requirements for green roofs here. We'll have more on that next time.

Q: How are you going to pay for the public transit system you're talking about with money from the TAD? I don't see how you can pay for it.

AG: In this county, the county doesn't control public transportation – MARTA does. MARTA, like many transportation agencies, has their own set of priorities lined up. But those priorities can be changed. When I went to talk to MARTA two years ago about creating a Beltline transit loop, I was told that there was no way; there were all these other priorities ahead of it. Well, the last time I went to speak to MARTA, I was told that the top transit priority is the Beltline. So the priorities can change.

Q: What kind of improvements would these things you're talking about make so that this area can handle more development? Do you really think that these things can solve the kind of traffic problems we're looking at?

AG: I think the bicycle network, the sidewalk network, and the road network will all provide real improvements. Will they solve all the problems and allow you to accommodate all development? I don't know.

Q: I'm a rabbi at a synagogue in this area. Fifty or sixty times a year, you have a Jewish community that walks a lot around the LaVista Road area. With all these people coming through here from this development, people are going to want to widen LaVista Road, which will completely transform it. Will these traffic studies really make a difference? Or will they show upward traffic pressure on an area that already has too much traffic?

AG: They will absolutely show upward traffic pressure, there's no question about that. What we are trying to do is find ways to mitigate that pressure.

In terms of connecting to LaVista road, I understand that there may be ways to send out finger extensions of the TAD beyond the central area. We need your help

in identifying things that are important. But how the traffic will affect LaVista Road is a separate thing, and I don't know what that impact will be.

Q: I want the elected officials here to know that the families in our neighborhood will notice the impact this has, and they will hold those officials accountable.

Q: I think the issue here is people who work. Bicycling and going to the park are very nice, but I have to go to work. At 7:30 AM, you can't use North Druid Hills Road. LaVista is a key feeder route. But you can't drive down LaVista, you can't drive down North Druid Hills. All the local roads have built traffic bumps because people don't want cars using their streets to drive around. And I can understand that – I wouldn't want those cars driving down my street. But this development is going to bring thousands of people to this area, and they're all going to have to get places. This will create chaos on the streets where people live.

AG: One of the important parts of this plan is to create a regular express bus to get to MARTA so people can take MARTA to places they want to go. I'm not saying that all of you will give up cars. But there must be a mass transit addition to this county. If you have any other suggestions, please let us know.

Q: Have you forecast the additional power demand that this development is going to place on this area? Is this going to require a new power substation to be built in this area? Where's that going to go?

AG: We have not forecast the additional power demand, but I'm comfortable that this won't require additional power for this area. We have talked to Georgia Power about burying the utility lines in this area.

Q: I have a question about your last picture showing setbacks. It seemed like it showed a 10 foot buffer between buildings on property lines. Where did that number come from? A lot of places use 25-foot setbacks. What about 40-foot setbacks?

AG: That is something we're playing around with, is the idea of creating setbacks from the public realm, and also to protect homeowners, particularly along the south side of Sembler's proposed development. But we don't have definite numbers for that – that's something we'll come back with next time.

Q: In your drawing of Kittredge Park, I didn't see any drawings of play equipment. We're starved for playgrounds for our children. Or are children a demographic you don't want?

AG: They are absolutely a necessary demographic. In terms of deciding what specific things go where, whether it's play equipment or ballfields or whatever, we haven't reached that stage. That's something that to be dealt with in the next phase of planning for the park.

Q: I live nearby in Toco Hills and I bike to work. What does the long range plan show for this area in for density? Why would you propose this much density, this many apartments and stores, for an area that already has too much traffic?

JR: We are not proposing anything. The idea of this process is to look at what this area can bear in terms of development. Some of these properties are already entitled for new density. We are trying to get ahead of the normal rezoning process and see what kind of infrastructure is required.

No decisions have been made. We set up this process because we want to get ahead of any proposed rezonings and understand what the implications are. That way, we can make informed, intelligent decisions on your behalf.

The property we're standing on is currently zoned for single-family houses. The law is that property must be treated similarly to similarly situated property. If we don't rezone this property, then we might have to show a judge why it should be rezoned when there are C-1 commercial properties on two sides of it.

People keep asking what decisions have been made. No decisions have been made. I don't know if anyone will believe it, but it's how we're going to operate.

KG: We did some charrettes with the Atlanta Regional Commission a little while back, and one of the principles that came out of that was to take areas around intersections on big streets and put development there to save and protect stable single-family neighborhoods.

We've had zoning proposals come in for 12-story residential on one of these corners. If we have no context in place, then things are just going to pop up, and the traffic is going to stay the same, or get worse. What we want to do is get ahead of that before new things come up.

Q: What will the timeline be for this project after next month's meeting?

AG: We'll give you a timeline at the next meeting. We'll also give you a rough estimate of the costs and what can be raised by the TAD, but that's ultimately going to be a separate study that will need to be done.

But there's another kind of timeline we need to consider. For example, Children's Healthcare is currently all one-story buildings. They have the right to build millions of square feet of commercial space on that space. I don't know if they will do that, or when. But there are others who are building right now. Gables showed us plans

last meeting for over 300 apartments that they are building right now. Marvin Isenberg has the right to build a new commercial building right now, and he has plans to do so. Sembler says they're ready to make a deal if they can get the rezoning they want. Executive Park is entitled for millions of square feet of commercial space. I don't know if that will happen. And I don't know what the options are for Target and for Loehmann's. But we also have to think about a timeline in which these property owners are going to be redeveloping their property, and when and how that is going to happen.

Q: Let's start with the premise that Sembler is not a done deal, and that nobody wants it. You raised lot of existing concerns – lack of sidewalks, greenspace, and so forth. Well, that will all be exacerbated by Sembler. I'm not sure how these existing concerns will be addressed if the problems are just going to be exacerbated. And now you're talking about a CID, which is just another tax for the community. How is this making anything better?

AG: First of all, the CID will be paid for by the developers. You will not have to pay more taxes. And the TAD will be paid for by additional tax revenue due to development. You won't pay for that either.

Q: But we'll pay for it with our quality of life. All these problems will just be exacerbated.

AG: Without the additional real estate taxes from development, I don't know how you can pay for bike lanes, sidewalks, greenspace, and all those things without your taxes going up.

Q: What we need here is modern transit. Can we have a modern streetcar in the middle of the street like they have in Salt Lake City?

AG: Yes, you could, but I wouldn't recommend it. I think you can't get the right-of-way. But you could have buses running on the side lanes, and you could eventually dedicate those to transit.

Q: This whole proposal doesn't consider the surrounding area. You come up here and talk about how nobody uses Kittredge Park. That's not true – I swim in the pool at Kittredge Park almost every day, and my children play there, too. We need playgrounds for them to play in, not big new developments. What about all the traffic this new development is going to create? What about selling these schools? Where are kids going to go to school? Our schools are already overcrowded.

AG: First of all, I didn't say nobody used Kittredge Park. I said it's an underused asset, and that it could be of greater benefit to the community and be used by many more people. And it could certainly include playgrounds and other things like that.

As for traffic, that's a study that needs to be completed so that we know what we're dealing. And as for schools, I'm not on the school board. I can't answer that for them – they have to answer for that.

Q: You know, it's great for Sembler to talk about how they revitalized Edgewood and revitalized all these other places, but we don't need to be revitalized. Let them go somewhere else. Why don't they go someplace that needs revitalization, like South DeKalb? I love shopping as much as anyone, maybe more so, but I don't want new stores here. I have plenty of stores I can drive to. We don't need more shopping here.

Q: I am a founding member of the AICP. [American Institute of Certified Planners.] Do you know what that is?

AG: Of course. I'm a member myself.

Q: There will be a community meeting next week at Lakeside High School. And I hope everybody read Mr. Broussard's commentary in the paper. We hope people will come to this meeting and have their commentary recorded on the record. We will keep institutional response to a minimum. These meetings are stimulated by the Sembler proposal on publicly-owned, publicly-controlled property. It has the support of the public officials because of money. Everybody's talking about traffic and roads. But traffic is caused by land use.

I don't see why we need to have all these proposals. We don't have to propose anything. The question of all this is, Why? Why do we want this?

Q: I have a question about one of your ideas, which was reinvigorating and extending Kittredge Park. That's a fine idea as far as it goes, but it will only benefit one of the four quadrants. How can the other three quadrants benefit?

AG: Thank you, it's a good question. The idea of extending the creek all the way to Briarcliff Road is to make sure you can get public access to the park from one of the boulevards. We're studying the degree to which it is possible to extend the park beyond Briarcliff Road into the next quadrant. The creek itself will have to go under Briarcliff Road, either through a conduit or under a bridge. Once it crosses,

it's down in a ravine, so it may be difficult to get down to it and use it for a park. But after that, the creek extends up along Executive Park Drive, and that's something we can use.

Beyond that, you have the boulevards, which create a green X going northwards.'

Q: Can you identify the streets of the loop?

AG: I can identify two parts of it for sure. You'll notice, by the way, that the loop has changed a lot. When we first presented it, it was a circle. But a number of people protested that we had it going through their homes. So when we came back last month and presented it again, it was a circle that was smushed in on one side. And now it's changed again.

One leg of the loop is still Executive Park Drive. That then connects to Sheridan Road, and the piece of Sheridan Road between Executive Park Drive and Briarcliff Road would have to be widened. The next part would go through the Sembler property, and that's a route that still needs to be worked out. Then the last part crosses up through North Druid Hills Road and Briarcliff Road and then it runs alongside the properties by Tullie Circle. There, it's in a sort of slope or a ravine, through what's now parking lots – you have the buildings on one side, and then the other side is a residential apartment development. But we're still studying the exact route for the moment.

Q: I have two questions. The first is about the boulevard – where will it neck down? And second question is, Is someone taking notes? [Yes.]

AG: The boulevard is probably going to have to neck down somewhere in the neighborhood of Target.

Q: I just wanted to say that it's a privilege to be a part of something like this. Thank you to Commissioners Rader and Gannon for organizing this.

Q: I want to know why my comment from last meeting is not on the website.

AG: I suggest you go to the website and look there, where you will find your comment. It is unfair for you to say otherwise, and you should apologize! [Note: The comment in question appears in the meeting notes from the June 27th meeting, two-thirds of the way down page 9. The comment relates to having a bilateral process with the Sembler company.]

JR: Thanks to everyone for coming out. We have tried to accommodate people's desire to participate in this process. If you are dissatisfied with the level of participation in the process, please let us know and we'll try harder. I want to emphasize again that this does not replace the regular public process of a rezoning. We are trying to bring you in earlier in the process, before the rezoning proposal comes in.

KG: Thanks to everybody for coming out. I used to be the head of a zoning committee. We spent all of our time and money fighting things, and they all came out crappy – maybe a little less crappy than they would have been. This process is an opportunity to get out ahead of that and to figure out what you want and incorporate.

Thank you to everyone for coming.

Additional Questions Submitted in Writing

Q: Why not preserve all the school property for future schools and a recreation extension of Kittredge? The property does not have to be sold to a developer. Retain as public property.

A: The school property is currently controlled by the DeKalb Board of Education. It is not under the control of the County Commission. Citizens who feel strongly about this issue are urged to contact their local school board member and express their opinions.

Q: With the necessity of elderly housing being discussed, the severe height limitation of building will limit the number of condo apartments possible per building and make them outpriced.

Q: I am extremely concerned about the quality of life in our quiet, stable neighborhood. The scope of this plan is too large and too high and too dense for our area. The traffic is a whole other major concern!

Q: Even with all street improvements, how do you get North Druid Hills and Briarcliff to absorb 3500 new residents plus commercial customers onto two roads very busy now due to Gwinnett County using North Druid Hills to get to I-85?
Alex Garvin & Associates: The traffic issue cannot be fully addressed until the traffic studies being conducted as part of the DRI process are complete.

The traffic issues along North Druid Hills Road and Briarcliff stem, to a certain extent, from regional traffic patterns that can only be addressed on a regional scale. That said, some of our proposals should mitigate some of the traffic issues. The separation of local and regional traffic on the boulevards should make traffic move more smoothly and steadily without interference from local turn-offs. The boulevards also increase road capacity by two lanes. The creation of the street grid network should enable local traffic to move through the area without clogging up the main arteries. And the addition of sidewalks and bike lanes should open up opportunities for local residents to move around without their cars. With that said, it will remain for traffic studies to determine whether or not the current and proposed roads have sufficient capacity to handle the level of development proposed by Sembler, Executive Park, and others.

Q: How will public transportation be utilized in the growth plan? Will there be minimum or optimum levels of service?

AGA: We are proposing that an express bus loop be created to connect Lindbergh Station, the study area, and the Emory/CDC area, which would enable residents, workers, and potential customers in this area to conveniently reach the jobs at Emory and the MARTA subway at Lindbergh Station. The level of service would be determined at a later stage by the agency operating the bus (likely MARTA).

Q: Will Peachtree DeKalb Airport flight volume and schedule be affected?

AGA: We do not know of any reason why the air traffic at Peachtree DeKalb Airport should be affected by any projects within the study area.

Q: Why doesn't Sembler pay for Kittredge Park?

AGA: If, as we propose, a TAD is created to pay for capital improvements, and if Sembler's redevelopment does move forward, then the increased real estate taxes from the Sembler development would, in fact, pay to renovate Kittredge Park. In addition, if the park is extended along the stream and encompasses the lake, then that park land would also come out of property owned by Sembler.

Q: What about all the existing apartment units that are empty now? Why do we need more? Who will rent these new units? Who can afford them?

Q: Can you keep the schools in the development? If not, young families won't be moving here – they'll go where schools are. Families are what bring stability to the neighborhood.

A: The Sembler company has indicated that the current schools would not fit in with their redevelopment plans. People with concerns about the schools property are urged to contact their school board representative.

Q: How many additional residences are expected above the current Park at Briarcliff?

A: The Park at Briarcliff contains 1017 units, which, according to the management, are 97% occupied. Sembler has announced plans to build 3700 apartments on the Park at Briarcliff property and the school property.

Q: Do we know where the proposed service entrances/loading docks will be located in the Sembler project?

A: The plans that Sembler presented at the June 27th meeting indicate three entrances to their development along Briarcliff Road (opposite Hopkins Road, Sheridan Road, and Loehmann's Plaza) and two additional entrances from North Druid Hills Road (both opposite the Target). They have not disclosed specific locations for loading docks within the development.

Q: Are there plans to widen LaVista Road between Briarcliff Road and North Druid Hills Road? Also, please review "The Loop" driving area.

AGA: We are not aware of any plans by Georgia or DeKalb DOT to widen that stretch of LaVista Road. We are not proposing any such widening as part of this master planning process.

Q: Why can't County Commissioners limit the number of stories of the proposed development? They can! The beautification plan is based on having high density development – to say that this is not intentional is patently false. The message from the community is: We Don't Want High Density!

Q: How, in particular, will the development impact the residents of Holly Lane backing out to the development?

A: The Sembler Company has indicated that is willing to meet individually with community groups to discuss the impact of their development once this planning process is over.

Q: There remains a significant concern about traffic congestion, sidewalks, etc. Why are we doing this plan? Who is going to pay for new roads to accommodate the extra traffic from the Plan? CID? No guarantees? If we wanted to live in a downtown city area we would. No.