

## Record of Public Meeting on 9.6.07

Jim Durrett, the executive director of the Livable Communities Coalition, thanked everybody for coming to the meeting and participating. He urged attendees who wished to ask a question to write their question on a note card, and that those questions would be answered, even if they were not asked in the meeting. [See below for written questions and answers.]

He then said that there were a few points he wanted to discuss up front, so that everybody could then concentrate on Mr. Garvin's presentation:

The first point was that this project is not about Sembler's plan to redevelop property – they are related, but this project is larger. It is about what is possible and what people would like to see in this area.

The second point was that Sembler's project was a "wake-up call" to the county, indicating that this area was attractive for redevelopment. That inspired Commissioners Jeff Rader and Kathie Gannon to look at a larger area, in order to plan for the future of the area. That information could then be used to put into place a masterplan that would reflect community consensus and be used as the basis for any future rezoning in the area.

The third point was the concern about who had paid for the process. At the start of the process, Durrett had reached out to all the commercial property owners, civic groups, churches, synagogues, and other organizations in the area and asked for their help to fund the process, and he took whatever help he could get. Sembler contributed funds to help pay for the process, as did others. However, contributors will not determine the contents of the plan.

The fourth point was that the Livable Communities Coalition's job had been to make sure that the process was principled and open. The first three meetings were focused on what people wanted in this process. People asked questions, gave suggestions, and wrote in to ask questions. Questions that had been e-mailed in are now posted on the website ([www.briarcliffnorthdruidhills.org](http://www.briarcliffnorthdruidhills.org)) under Community Input.

The fifth point was concern about the fate of the school property. The school announced a decision in 2006 to move the schools [i.e. the magnet school, school for the arts, and open campus school]. According to the Board of Education, these are all county-wide schools, not neighborhood schools. That move was funded by the SPLOST, which passed in March. People who are concerned should let the

school board know – there is a school board meeting in October. The school board’s decision was not driven by interest expressed in the property.

Mr. Durrett then introduced Alexander Garvin.

*Alexander Garvin:*

[Slide 1]

Before I begin, I’d like to make a few points of my own. The first thing is to dismiss the notion that this process ends tonight. It has been one of the most exciting public participation processes I’ve been involved in, including civic leaders, elected officials, property owners, and many other people, as well as the general public. I urge you all to visit the project website, where we have posted the posted presentations and records from all the previous meetings, as well as the e-mails we have received from people and our responses.

The next point is that we do not work for any particular property owner. We represent everybody – you, the whole of DeKalb County, as well as a number of property owners. But we are an independent consultant, hired by the Livable Communities Coalition, and what we present is what we think.

This process has focused on the public realm – that is what we, the residents of DeKalb County own. It is the roads, the sidewalks, bike lanes, parks, and so forth. At the very first meeting, people told us that the sidewalks are scandalous, and they are. We have responded.

What we have created is a public realm framework around which the property owners can build, and for all of you to enjoy. Over the course of this process, the proposals for the public realm have changed a great deal. And the result is something that we call, “Greening DeKalb.”

[Slide 2]

Last time, we began by talking about Kittredge Park, and how it could be improved. [Slide 3] We proposed that Kittredge Park be extended along the stream, using the 75-foot buffers that are required by the state and the county. We also proposed that the rare plant species, the star vine, be preserved and protected in the park, and that the park be developed with paths so that people could walk in the woods, and that the invasive species be removed.

[Slide 4]

We also talked about the lack of a sidewalk network. As you can see, the sidewalks are discontinuous, and they do not form a network. We’ve been hearing

about this since our first meeting. [Slide 5] And so we proposed a completely new network of sidewalks, protected bicycle lanes, and streets for this area.

[Slide 6]

We also spoke about the lack of public transportation in this part of DeKalb, and so we proposed an express bus loop. It would go from Lindbergh Station, travel along Sidney Marcus Boulevard and Buford Highway, then turn down North Druid Hills Road, then down Briarcliff Road and Clifton Road to Emory and the CDC, and then come back along the Seacoast Rail Line right-of-way to return to Lindbergh Station.

[Slide 7]

We recommended several improvements to I-85 – a new turn-off to Executive Park Drive, eliminating the bump-out, and creating a new road to the I-85 access road.

[Slide 8]

We also talked about all the curb cuts on North Druid Hills Road, indicated here by red arrows. One thing we were told early on is that there are far too many accidents on North Druid Hills Road, many of them from cars turning into and out of these curb cuts.

[Slide 9]

What we have right now on North Druid Hills Road, and Briarcliff Road, is an inadequate public realm – not only the curb cuts, but the lack of bike lanes, the poor sidewalks, the traffic, the lack of trees.

[Slide 10]

And so we proposed to turn North Druid Hills Road and Briarcliff Road into boulevards that would look like this, with wide sidewalks, protected bike lanes, and separate service roads for local traffic.

[Slide 11]

Back in the second presentation, we showed you this map of impervious surfaces – as you can see, much of the western portion of the area consists of impervious surfaces, and many of them are parking lots. [Slide 12] So last time, we discussed regulations for parking lots, so that if the Target parking lot were built today, it would look something like this. [Slide 13]

[Slide 14]

That's where we were in July. And now I'd like to show you the work that we've done since July.

[Slide 15]

This is Kittredge Park as it exists today.

[Slide 16] We're now proposing to extend the park even further – to expand it along the stream to Briarcliff Road, and then, across Briarcliff, to acquire the parking lot, which is almost always empty, and then continue it along Executive Park Drive, where Gables has agreed to build a sidewalk along the stream, and then terminating in a new pond that Executive Park is proposing to build at the point where the stream crosses back under the road.

Kittredge Park is currently 32 acres. We are proposing to add 20 new acres of parkland, a 63% increase in parkland.

[Slide 17]

Here's what the stream looks like today – this is by Executive Park Drive, looking south towards the intersection with Sheridan Road. [Slide 18] And this is what it would look like with a park – a bike lane, a sidewalk, paths down to the water, and new landscaping.

[Slide 19]

We've been working with some of the property owners as they develop their plans so that it is consistent with the work we have been doing. Here is the layout of Executive Park's plans. As you can see, there is a grid network of streets, which is almost exactly the layout that we are proposing. They've also included our proposed new turn-off from I-85, which leads into Executive Park Drive and on to a road that, when Loehmann's may be redeveloped in the future, can lead all the way through to Briarcliff Road and across to the Sembler property, or whatever else develops there. And when I say, In the future, I'm talking not about one year from now, or five years from now. I believe this site will not be the same 25 years from now.

[Slide 20]

We've also been working with the Sembler Company. This is the street grid in their latest plans. There are some similarities with our plan, and there are some differences. The layout of streets in the northern section is pretty much the same as ours. There are some very serious differences in the southern section, which I don't think works very well. They also do not have the 75-foot buffers along the entire length of the stream. Again, the plan is fairly consistent with ours along the most of the northern portion, but it isn't wide enough on the southern portion. And they don't have the buffer around the lake, which we think they should have. They have

park drives along the northern and the western edges of Kittredge Park, but I'm not sure they're the right dimensions. They do not have the park drives along the entire length of the stream. They also propose to erect some buildings in the stream buffer, which we believe ought to be protected parkland. In addition, though you can't see it here, I have reservations about the heights of some of their buildings in the southern portion, and I don't think the southern portion so far provides an adequate buffer of protection for the single-family homeowners to the south.

[Slide 21]

This is the I-85 interchange as it currently looks. [Slide 22] We proposed to create new turn-off lanes to Executive Park Drive. [Slide 23] We also recommended making the access road two-way. [Slide 24] We're now proposing that the underpass to exit onto North Druid Hills north should connect to the new road being created by the Bellsouth Tower. You would need a traffic light there, and then you could come off the highway onto Tullie Road, or could turn left from Cliff Valley Road, or could go from Tullie Road onto the highway, all without going onto North Druid Hills Road.

[Slide 25]

This is the boulevard we've proposed. On each side, there is a sidewalk, a protected bike lane, a row of trees, a row of parked cars, a local service lane, another planted strip, and then five lanes of traffic in the middle, which is what is there now. Where we propose a bus stop, there will be a turn-off that will allow the bus to leave the traffic lane so it can drop off and pick up passengers without obstructing traffic.

[Slide 26]

I know that plans can be hard to read, so here is a perspective drawing of the same thing – sidewalk, bike lane, trees, parking, and service lane. As you see where the middle lane isn't being used as a turn lane, it can become a landscaped strip.

[Slide 27]

This shows you all the new trees that would be planted on the boulevards. Actually, if you look closely, you can see that we were planning to keep the three large trees on Mr. Isenberg's property, but he just cut those down this past week. I asked my staff how many new trees would be planted on these boulevards, and they told me 900. And I said, "No, go back and count them all." And they said, "We did. It's exactly 900." In my opinion, 900 new trees is a major improvement, in terms of shade, habitat for animals, absorption of carbon dioxide, absorption of

water, and other benefits. If you look closely, you'll also notice that the intersection has a roundabout there, so let me explain how we got there.

[Slide 28]

What we were concerned about was a car in the service lane that needed to make a left-hand turn. We wanted to avoid a situation like that of the top image, where the car has to cut across two lanes of traffic to get to the left-hand turn lane. It is much safer to have a car pull into one lane, enter the roundabout, and then make the turn.

[Slide 29]

What we originally came up with was this, a roundabout with two lanes, with places for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross over. But we looked at it, and thought about the traffic on North Druid Hills Road, and decided there was a better way to do this.

[Slide 30]

We added an underpass. Thus, in this version, two lanes of North Druid Hills Road – one in each direction – go under the roundabout and straight through, which means cars will never have to stop at the intersection. Any remaining traffic would use the roundabout. There would be a traffic light to allow pedestrians and bikers to cross the street or go to the new park that's created in the middle.

[Slide 31]

Looking from the air, the intersection currently looks like this. [Slide 32] After the changes, it would look like this – trees, an underpass, and the roundabout.

[Slide 33]

On the ground it, currently looks like this – or at least, it used to look like this before those trees were cut down. [Slide 34] With the roundabout, it would look like this. As you can see, this is not some enormous traffic circle – it's modest, it's in scale with the neighborhood, it's a lovely new public space for the neighborhood, and with the underpass, it handles quite a lot of traffic.

[Slide 35]

Here's the express bus route again. [Slide 36] And here's the route it would take through this area – down North Druid Hills Road and then turning onto Briarcliff Road, with a stop on North Druid Hills Road by Executive Park, and another stop on Briarcliff by Loehmann's, and possible another one by the proposed Sembler development. There also must be provision for a local bus. [Slide 37] This is the

route we've mapped out for a local shuttle bus – it would connect to the express bus, and provide access to each of the developments that may come here.

[Slide 38]

This rendering is to show what a main bus stop on the boulevard would look like, with the pull-out area for the bus so that it doesn't block traffic.

[Slide 39]

We've also developed a set of more specific proposed regulations to protect single-family homeowners from new developments. They include a series of options for developers to follow. The first, and simplest, is a 100-foot planted setback from the property line of the single-family houses, and after that a six-story building.

[Slide 40] An alternative is a 50-foot landscaped setback and a 50-foot residential street, with a six-story building on the opposite side of the street. [Slide 41] Or, you could have a 30-foot rear yard and then a 35-foot row of townhouses, then a 60-foot street, and then a six-story building. [Slide 42] Or, finally, a 30-foot landscaped strip, a 50-foot street, a row of 35-foot tall townhouses, and then a six-story building.

[Slide 43]

The other thing we looked at was building height. Currently, the zoning calls mostly for uniform heights in this area. We thought it would be better to allow developers to create a variety of places that might include taller buildings. Consequently, we are proposing a six-story height limit, with taller buildings allowed on no more than 8% of a property.

[Slide 44]

However, developers would only be permitted to build taller buildings further than 400 feet from a property line facing single-family houses. We have not come up with an exact height limit for those buildings, but I think it would be appropriate to permit a small number of buildings of a height similar to the Bellsouth Tower, which is about 20 stories tall.

[Slide 45]

The regulations also address parking lots. Currently, most of the parking lots in this area are like the Target parking lot – they are barren and unlandscaped, and they are almost entirely impervious surface. [Slide 46] Under our regulations, they would have to be planted with trees and landscaping, and they would have to have places for the stormwater to drain into the groundwater.

[Slide 47]

I'm sure you're all wondering, how much does this cost? And the answer is: a lot of money. We have prepared rough estimates for how much all these improvements would cost, and I want to emphasize that these are estimates – there is much more work to be done to figure how much each thing would cost. But I think this gives us a useful ballpark, and we estimated that the improvements would cost between \$135 and 185 million dollars. In addition, we have, over the past several weeks, received a number of letters about the importance of creating affordable and workforce housing in this area. We are recommending that if there is excess money in the Tax Allocation District (TAD) once all these capital improvements are paid for then that money, or a portion of it, be devoted to building affordable and workforce housing.

[Slide 48]

This is just to review how a TAD works. To create a TAD, a boundary line is drawn around a certain area, and the amount of property tax revenue that the county and the school board receive from that area is frozen at current levels for a given period – say, 25 years. During that time, both would continue to receive the same amount of tax revenue. But where there is development, the tax revenues would rise to reflect the increased value created by the new development. All that extra tax revenue would be assigned to the TAD to pay for capital investments required by the master plan. Just to be clear, nobody's taxes are raised – the excess tax revenue comes from increased property values (in this case commercial property).

We don't know how much money the TAD can raise. For one thing, there's a great deal more analysis that would need to be done to determine the potential tax yields. For another, the money the TAD can generate is a function of how much development there is – the more development, the more tax revenue comes in. But I think we are in the right ballpark. TAD revenues should be able to pay for the capital costs I just showed you, and I'll explain why. For example, if a developer wished to build 1.5 million square feet of retail space, at a cost of \$250 per square foot, then that's \$375 million in improvements right there. If the property tax rate were 1%, that would be an additional \$3.75 million per year, right there. Here, the property tax rate is 1.6%, so that would be closer to \$6 million a year. Over 25 years, \$6 million a year comes to a total of \$150 million. That's a very rough calculation, assuming that only a small part of the area is developed.

[Slide 49]

If there are maintenance costs that the TAD can't cover, then it's also possible to raise money through a Community Improvement District, or CID. A CID is a voluntary tax surcharge that commercial property owners – not residential property

owners – agree to pay on top of their property taxes, and that money is used in the area to pay for maintenance, street cleaning, security, and things like that. This technique is very commonly used around the country, including in a number of places here in Atlanta.

[Slide 50]

This shows you what the area is like now – you see the dead end streets, the park that many people can't find, much less get to. [Slide 51] This is the street network we've proposed. The black streets are sections that we think might be added almost immediately, based on the development plans that are being put forward. The red streets could be put in place in the years down the road, if the sites that are now occupied by Loehmann's, Target, and Children's Healthcare were redeveloped.

[Slide 52]

And this shows you how many trees you would gain in this area – all these street trees – as well as all the new parkland you would gain. It is a much greener public realm than what currently exists. This is why I have entitled this presentation "Greening DeKalb" –

We have spent the last six months talking with you, looking at the landscape, conducting research, meeting with civic leaders and elected officials and property owners and county and state officials. From that work, we have developed what we believe are a set of practical alternatives. These are not fantasies – these are things that could happen. You have the opportunity, if you would like, to make them happen.

We are not saying how much development there ought to be here. What we are saying is that this is the public realm you must have if you want an exciting, 21<sup>st</sup> century community. It is up to you to make it happen. It will only occur if there are people here who are serious about having a renovated and expanded Kittredge Park, serious about having sidewalks throughout this whole area, serious about having a bicycle network, and serious about planting more trees. If there are, then I believe that the approach we have taken, "Greening DeKalb," can be a model for the rest of the country.

Thank you.

## Questions – Spoken

Q: How do we know that the TAD money would stay here rather than going to South DeKalb?

Alex Garvin: The law requires the TAD money to stay within the TAD boundaries.

Jim Durrett: I just wanted to clear up some confusion about the CID – I saw people look concerned at the mention of higher taxes. The taxes for the CID would only be on commercial property owners, not on homeowners.

Q: Two-lane roundabouts can be tough to cross. How will that work for pedestrians to get across?

AG: There will be a traffic light to allow pedestrians and bicyclists to get across. Just to be clear, some of you may have seen roundabouts in Washington DC which are enormous. That is *not* what we're proposing – this would be much smaller and in scale with the neighborhood.

Q: I want to commend the title of this presentation and all the pretty pictures that you've shown. But I think that's a diversion from the real issue, which is traffic and density. Also, what happens when Briarcliff Road leaves being six lanes and goes back down to two lanes? And finally, you can't block a 20-story building with a six-story building.

AG: First, in answer to your question about traffic, there is now no underpass at the intersection of North Druid Hills Road and Briarcliff Road. There are no service lanes along either of those two roads to handle local traffic, and remember that the center driving lanes of the boulevard that we propose are as wide as North Druid Hills is now. These improvements will add more traffic capacity. How much capacity it will add will require a traffic study. I'm not a traffic engineer, I can't tell you. But it will certainly add capacity to what you have now. We're also proposing to create a local street network, instead of having everything dump onto the two main roads. I don't know how much more capacity that can handle, but it can certainly handle more than you have now. Ultimately, we're going to have to have traffic studies to tell how much density all this can handle.

Q: The developer should carry the costs of all these improvements up front not the neighborhood. Also, the cost to replace the land for the school & stadium is very low if the selling price is \$64 million.

AG: The money to pay for these improvements would need to come from the increased tax revenue from new development. Bonds could be issued against that tax revenue to raise the money to pay for the improvements up front. The money would not have to come from the neighborhood.

Q: The school is not falling down, the stadium is not falling down. If we want walkable facilities, why don't we just keep the school and stadium?

AG: Whether or not to keep the school and stadium is a question that's up to the school board. But if you want to be able to pay for all these things that we're talking about plus receive the benefits of the new facilities, the funding is going to have to come from a future tax allocation district, and how much money that raises depends on how much development there is.

Q: If Sembler goes bust, who pays?

AG: I would guess that the bonds would be structured so that there would be a safe cushion to make sure there is enough of money to pay them off, even if something happens like what you describe, but of course there are no guarantees. All I'm saying is that there are opportunities.

Q: How will the new roads integrate into the roads higher up? This will cause great congestion.

Q: Many things will need to fall into place in order for this to become into a reality; is this realistic?

AG: Yes, but it will require work and the will to push it. For example, I have had great difficulty with GDOT because they do not allow lanes that are 10 feet wide (such as the lanes I've observed on Peachtree Street, for example).

Q: If the school board does not sell the land, will what is proposed be in jeopardy?

AG: Not necessarily, Executive Park will redevelop, Loehmans may be next; these projects should all comply with the master plan.

Q: The QUAD study is not the core community of the area.

Q: This study is a sham, because it is paid for by the developers not the county. Sembler does not have a track record of developing green. There is a disparity between what is said in these meetings and what appears on the website. And there is no traffic study – any professional planner knows to do a traffic study.

Q: The purpose of this process is to come up with an overlay for the area that reflects how the residents would like the area developed for the future. Knowing that this will take time, will you put in place a moratorium on large development until then?

Kathie Gannon: We've had some success getting a small moratorium, but it's been harder to get a large moratorium – you need 4 votes for that. We have been able to hold the rezonings at Brookhaven until completion of the LCI.

Jeff Rader: The point of this process was to create a context for making decisions. I'm disappointed that we don't have the traffic numbers in yet, so we can't talk about density and the regional impact. Those traffic numbers are required by the DRI (Development of Regional Impact) process, and no decision will be made until those are in. Today, Executive Park submitted their notice to begin a DRI. Both Sembler and the Executive Park DRI applications are on the website.

Q: Do you insist you do not work for Sembler?

AG: I insist.

Q: Have you assessed the potential impact of the Sembler project on the planning you are doing? What about the probable development of Executive Park.

AG: As I said in my presentation, there are a number of things in the Sembler development that I think are not desirable. But we have looked at Sembler's proposal, and worked with them, and their proposal has changed. I remember after the fourth meeting, a young man got up and the first thing he said is that this is wrong because everything is facing inward, nothing is facing the street. We did work to ensure that there are buildings facing North Druid Hills Road and Briarcliff Road. I believe we've convinced Sembler to make those changes.

We have also worked with Executive Park, and the street grid in their plan now matches the street grid that we are proposing almost exactly.

Q: In your professional opinion, do you think that what Sembler is proposing is good or bad for the area? And what would you be doing if you lived here?

AG: If I lived here, I'd be doing exactly what I'm doing now, but I wouldn't be stopping after 6 months.

I cannot offer a complete opinion on the Sembler project as I have not seen it all, it is a work in progress. In my opinion, I do not believe that the way the streambed is being treated in the Sembler plan is desirable. I also believe that they could make improvements to the southern part of the plan.

Q: I like this neighborhood the way it is and there's no reason it should have to change or be sold out to commercial interests.

Q: Right now, I am neither for nor against development, but I have two concerns. The first is traffic. These tree-lined, narrow boulevards are going to slow things down. 80% of the traffic in this area is through-traffic. These narrow streets and

roundabouts will slow down that traffic. If this goes through, we're going to need those sidewalks and bike lanes because we'll have complete gridlock and everybody will have to walk.

AG: I agree somewhat, but I think you're not seeing some things that we're presenting. The underpass under the roundabout will move traffic. The service lanes will move traffic – with the service lanes, the boulevards will be wider than North Druid Hills Road is now. I *do* think that the traffic will be calmed by narrower lanes. I was told in the first month that there are too many accidents here. Slower traffic will cause fewer accidents. But we are not reducing the width of North Druid Hills Road or Briarcliff Road – we are making both of them wider.

Q: My second concern is that DeKalb County is planning to tear down three schools and the stadium. They won't be rebuilt for years. What are we going to do in the meantime? Where are the children going to go to school? Where are they going to play football?

Jim Durrett: The School System has announced plans to move the schools, and those plans preexisted any proposals for development in this area.

Q: First, what will be the extent of the traffic studies? Second, what will happen to the businesses that are on North Druid Hills Road? Third, will we have a referendum where we can vote on all these things?

Jeff Rader: The traffic studies are being conducted as part of the DRI process – they are required to look at traffic as part of that. For the project to be approved, you must have a minimum level of service – a D, which is better than what you have now. If you can't show that it will have that, the project will be disapproved by the reviewing agency.

What will happen to the businesses here is a significant question. It's beyond the scope of what we're trying to do here. I don't have the impression that Sembler will try to compete with the mom and pop businesses, but instead with the businesses that are across the county line in Fulton County. But there are businesses and shopping centers that open and close everyday. That's the competitive economy that we live in, and we don't have the control to pick the winners and the losers.

As for a referendum, no, you don't get to vote. You do get to vote for your county commissioners. But to my knowledge, there is no provision in the state of Georgia for referenda on zoning matters before the community. What we do have is that one of the two county commissioners for this area – me or Commissioner Gannon – have to vote for the rezoning for it to be approved. If neither of us votes for it,

even if there are five other votes, it can't be approved. That's why we're having this process – so we can get the facts to make a decision.

Q: How do we deal with the water and sewage for this development? Where are we going to send the kids to school?

JR: On a mass basis, the water and sewer capacity is there for this project. The big picture is that water and sewer capacity is not a problem. The mains and trunks may need to be improved, but that's doable. As for the schools, the DeKalb Board of Education is responsible. We expect them to advise and work with us. And we've reached out and asked them to work with us. But the Board of Education is separately elected.

Q: I'm a new resident to this area, and I applaud what you're trying to do here. I think this will allow my kids to have a better neighborhood to live in than what is here right now.

Q: I applaud the planning process that Commissioners Rader and Gannon have brought up. We need a cohesive plan for this area. I have three concerns. First, why had this planning proposal gone on the assumption that the school will be sold and redeveloped? Second, why will this study be used to supplement the Comprehensive Plan? These developers would be the primary beneficiaries of that. Third, why is a private group of citizens reviewing this plan instead of the county planning department that we already pay for? We should be discussing what we want to do with this property, because it is ours.

JR: We're not presuming anything about the school property. What we're doing is so that in the event that it is sold, we want to know what the capacity for this property is. We don't control whether or not it's sold.

Q: You can say no to rezoning it.

JR: And we may do that. But we want to know the information first. I think we need to look at this plan based on its merits, not based on how the funding was cobbled together. We can't control the county staff – the county executive controls them. I don't like the way we funded it, but it was the only way we were able to fund it. Let's look at what came out of it and see what we think. We want to be able to say what our idea and your idea is. We're not done yet – we're obviously going to continue with this process.

As for the community capacity we're using, I think we've got great capacity. The people on the technical advisory committee seem excited about this. These people are neighborhood zoning chairs and architecture and development professionals. I

urge you to talk to those people about the community that you want to develop. We don't control the county – we're doing our level best to get the information back to you.

Q: I'm interested in the plan to add access to I-85. Have you studied what it will do to the neighborhoods? Will it clog up our streets?

AG: All of the improvements to I-85 that we're proposing are designed to divert traffic *away* from the intersection of North Druid Hills Road and Briarcliff Road. We must reduce the impact of traffic on that intersection. The underpass does that same thing – it reduces the number of cars that actually come into that intersection. Now, if all these things are built, what is the capacity of that system? I don't know, I'm not a traffic engineer – there's traffic work that needs to be done. We've only just responded to the current version of what the property owners are proposing to do.

Q: Will this divert traffic through the neighborhoods?

AG: No. It will divert traffic through Executive Park and through Loehmann's if they get redeveloped. The street grid will alleviate some of the local traffic. Also, the dead end streets will be transformed and become part of a continuous system.

Q: I went to the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday night. We presented them with a petition with 80 signatures to delay selling this property. Please, sign the petition asking the school to delay the sale, and to use the property for other purposes.

Q: Everybody is asking about these traffic studies – who is conducting them, and when will we have the results?

JR: It's being done as part of the DRI within the process of review. Sembler's traffic study is underway. It's being conducted by a company called Kimley-Horn, which is being paid by Sembler, and which is conducting the study under the direction of the regional agencies as part of the DRI process. We don't control the process – the state does. We have asked them to go above and beyond the normal study.

Q: I live at the corner of Hopkins and Briarcliff. Will the boulevard affect my property? DOT already took 14 of my specimen trees.

JR: We don't know yet. There's more study to be done.

Q: Why are you proposing parallel parking in front of Executive Park and Sembler and all these other properties when none of them face the street?

AG: First, we want people to park and get out and use the sidewalks, instead of everyone parking in these vast parking lots that you have now. Second, parking makes the conditions safer for pedestrians and bikers because it protects them from traffic. Third, we're hoping someday there will be stores along on the street.

Q: Why do you say there's no water problems? We've been on water restrictions for several years.

JR: Those water restrictions are statewide, due to the drought we've been having. We're talking about local water and sewer capacity. I'm just saying that we have that infrastructure capacity. Whether or not it's advisable is a different issue. I should mention, though, that most of the development that's being looked at here is multi-family, and multi-family residents tend to use less per person than single-family residents.

AG: However, there is a different water problem here, and that is drainage and erosion in this area, and it is a serious problem.

Q: I'm concerned about that developer who just took down those oak trees on Briarcliff Road.

JR: We are currently investigating to see whether cutting down those trees was consistent with the 2003 zoning conditions on that property.

Q: I'm a former school board member. The school board will meet in the first week of October. If you care about what happens to this school property, you have to turn out and make your voice heard.

You say this plan is going to cost \$185 million. I've never seen the county bring in a project on budget, so you can triple that.

Our schools are overcrowded. If they sell this, they will have to condemn your property to get land for new schools.

And your commissioners are wrong about your right to vote on this plan.

Commissioner Gannon is up for reelection, and three of the Board of Education members are up for reelection, and we have the power of recall. Follow the money.

Q: First, I've dealt with MARTA. They never bring in a project on budget – they're nasty, and they do what they want. Your costs are very vague – you don't know how much this will cost. Those figures, they're just figures.

AG: These figures are estimates – they're our best guess. We would need to have actual costs to make a more accurate prediction, and that's a whole other set of

work. What we are trying to do with this estimate is to gauge the degree and see whether we are in the realm of possibility. And I think we are. I had the same problems with MARTA as you when I went to meet with them about the Beltline. That said that is wasn't a priority for this region – they were wrong.

Q: When you show the buildings stepping back from the property line, why don't you show it in the same kind of picture as the park? Why can't you make those look so beautiful?

AG: We're not designing the buildings – the property owners are. The purpose of those regulations is to say what you can't do, not to dictate what is done.

Q: I looked on a map and I saw that there are three pieces of property that the county owns. Who really owns that property, and is it going to be sold?

JR: The property you're talking about is Kittredge and Audubon Parks – that's owned by the county, and it's not being sold, it's being preserved, and it's part of the plan. The other property in this area, aside from the schools property, is the Park at Briarcliff. The Housing Authority owns it, and we don't control it.

Q: Professor Garvin, I've read your book cover to cover. One thing you say in there is that sometimes plans work, and sometimes they don't. On the website you say that this project is supposed to produce a zoning plan, but instead we have a public realm plan. And we don't have a traffic study, so we don't know if the streets are sufficient.

AG: I said at the very first meeting that we would have a public realm plan. We said we would create a regulatory framework for the county commission – we've done that with the proposed regulations on the setbacks and the building heights and the parking lots. This process will continue as this community tries to create a better future, and as better information becomes available and new ideas appear, this plan will keep changing.

#### Written

Q: How long will it take the TAD to fund the improvements – approximate number of years.

AGA: The length of the TAD is flexible – the law allows TADs to last up to 25 years. However, it is possible to estimate the total revenue of the TAD over its lifetime and to issue bonds against that expected revenue. That can be done within the first year or two, so that the money will be promptly available for capital investments.

Q: North Druid Hills from LaVista to I-85 is a parking lot of traffic! Do you think people are going to walk and cycle to I-85 to get to work?

AGA: Though we do think that walking and biking and transit will become more important and useful ways of getting around, we do expect that the vast majority of travel to, from, and through this area will continue to be by motor vehicle in the foreseeable future. In light of that, and the predicted increase in the volume of traffic coming from other areas, we have recommended a number of improvements to improve the flow of traffic in this area: The boulevard provides two additional lanes in each direction on North Druid Hills Road and Briarcliff Road, and it separates local from regional traffic, eliminating the number of turn-ins and turn-outs that slow traffic and create dangerous conditions. The roundabout with the underpass should allow many more cars to move through the intersection, some without ever stopping for a traffic light. The street grid will allow local traffic to circulate through the area without clogging up the main regional roads or getting stuck in the pass-thru traffic. We expect all of these improvements to make it easier for drivers to move to and through this area.

Q: Why are we having meetings every two weeks to try to convince residents to accept a plan that no one is interested in?

AGA: The purpose of the monthly meetings was to develop a plan with community input that would reflect the concerns of the community and would provide a realistic set of opportunities for the community and the county to pursue, if they so chose. With the growth predicted for this area by Emory and the Atlanta Regional Commission and considering what already can be built in the quad and surrounding areas, if we don't plan ahead now we will never be able to go back and undo the congestion. We have heard a great diversity of opinions on these plans – some people have been skeptical, but we have also received a great deal of encouragement and support, both in writing and in person, from members of the community. We believe that this plan responds in a realistic fashion to the concerns we heard at the meetings, in e-mails, and in discussions, as well as issues that we felt were pressing and needed to be addressed – trees and greenery, walkability, motor vehicle circulation, recreation and open space, protection for single-family homeowners, and environmental degradation. It is now up to the community, the property owners, and the county officials to decide which of these proposals they believe are worth pursuing.

Q: Garvin can propose 900 trees and whatever he wants...what's going to make Sembler follow the plan once he gets the property? Sembler lied to City Hall East – why would they agree to underpasses, etc. NO WAY!

AGA: Sembler is not the controlling factor in the public realm plan. Funding public improvements will require that the county pass a TAD – this would not

require approval or commitment from the property owners, but it would depend on property taxes from increased development. If the plan is to be implemented, it will also require legal commitments on the part of both the county and the property owners. The additional parkland and new roads would require a commitment on the part of the developers – those could be legally enshrined as a condition of any rezoning that the county commission passes.

Q: Do Gannon and Rader support the selling of the schools to private development?

Gannon, Rader: Based on a lack of School System engagement in any public planning process, we think a decision on sale of the property is premature.

Q: I heartily endorse the idea of permeable parking areas and the inclusion of strips for trees in those lots. I made this suggestion several years ago. Also increasing the expanse of hard surfaces adds to the heat dome and decreases rainfall.

Q [For County Commissioners]: What is the criteria you will use to either approve or reject rezoning request? Mr. Rader indicated that he or Comm. Gannon would have to vote for rezoning.

Gannon, Rader: There are a number of criteria that are evaluated for consistency with an adopted comprehensive plan and legal requirements of zoning districts. We hope to also be able to use the local area plan that encompasses the entire study area. Consistency with the local community interest, and with the broader public interest are also evaluated.

Q: I am a DeKalb County resident for 25 years. I am disappointed at the negativity of the residents. Nobody is willing to have an open mind to the change. You all have a lot of positive ideas, I am in extreme minority therefore didn't want to stand up.

Q: Whatever happens to this proposed project, building is taking place in Executive Park and at the northwest corner of North Druid Hills and Briarcliff. What are Kathie Gannon and Jeff Rader and the DeKalb County Commission doing to address this increased traffic situation and what is the time frame for this plan?

Gannon, Rader: It is our aim to direct development in such a way that it is required to generate the funding necessary to improve traffic condition in the area. We can do that through a TAD. Taxes do not provide the money needed to fix, much less add to our failing transportation infrastructure. The small amount of

money from the 2005 Bond will go to striping and widening the most dangerous intersections.

Q: The loop road going along Cliff Valley Way turning left on the I-85 Access Road to return to I-85 — How will that road affect the church property at that corner?

AGA: Our only proposals affecting Cliff Valley Way is that the I-85 Access Road be made two-way so that a left-hand turn can be made from Cliff Valley Way onto the Access Road, and that sidewalks be built for the length of the street, on both sides. Neither of these should affect the church property, or any other property along that road.

Q: Don't we have a tree ordinance? After what they just did on the opposite corner, it's obvious that it doesn't apply to developers. Does your "big picture" plan propose that our county wake up and really protect our trees?

AGA: Any ordinance is useless unless it is properly applied and enforced by the responsible executive branches of the governing municipalities. It is essential that any regulation we propose – or any other regulation, for that matter – be fairly and rigorously enforced.

Q: Y'all want to know and do what we want: Just out of curiosity, can we take a "vote" in this room to see who's in favor and who's opposed? By standing of a show of hands.

Gannon, Rader: As emotional as this process is, no one yet has enough information to make an informed decision on how development should evolve in this area. Sembler's proposals have not been formalized or filed with DeKalb County. This notwithstanding, we clearly see that some participants are not supportive of the Sembler project as they understand it.

Q: This is not Europe or the UK. Atlanta drivers will never figure out how to use it. [Roundabout?] How do you cross the street?

AGA: Roundabouts have been successfully and safely used not only in other countries, but in America as well, including in Georgia. They require careful design and clear signage. In the case of this roundabout, there will be traffic lights to allow pedestrians and bikers to cross at appropriate intervals.

Q: My comments/concerns: (1) "Affordable housing" distorts the marketplace. (2) We really need a MARTA train station to accommodate the traffic. (3) Narrowing roads to 10-foot lanes will probably cause or increase accidents. (4) Regardless of whatever street and greening improvements are proposed, I don't believe it can

accommodate increased development and thereby the increased traffic. (5) I am opposed to the Sembler proposal, and I vote.

AGA: 1)It is essential that any affordable or workplace housing be targeted to an unserved part of the housing market, rather than placed in competition with market-rate housing. 2)A MARTA train station would be a marvelous improvement, but we think that it is highly unlikely to happen. We proposed the express bus service as a feasible alternative. 3)We believe that precisely the opposite would happen – narrower lanes force drivers to drive more slowly and more carefully, and research studies have shown that they tend to cause much fewer accidents. 4)We believe that these improvements are essential regardless of the level of future development. How much development this area can handle requires the completion of the traffic studies to understand how much additional traffic new development would generate, and how much capacity these proposals create.

Q: I am concerned that the proposed development will (soon) end up in Briarcliff being four- or five-laned to I-285. If that were to happen, Briarcliff would lose the trees that give it its character. [Also,] Does Briarcliff have some sort of designation to protect it from widening?

AGA: The purpose of the boulevard proposals are to ensure that if Briarcliff is widened, it is in a way that provides more trees, better character, and a more pleasant environment, rather than turning into I-285. We do not know of any designation of Briarcliff that would prevent it being widened.

Q: How does this plan fit into the county commissioners' long-range plan developed several years ago with community input?

Gannon, Rader: To forestall any premature decision, we suppressed the density proposed in the staff draft of the long-range (Comprehensive) plan, and designated the area a "neighborhood center." Garvin's proposed layout is consistent with that, but Sembler's conceptual densities are not. However, existing zoning in much of the area already permits higher densities than "neighborhood center". These properties could build out at permitted density regardless of the Comp Plan. However, upon the completion of the Briarcliff-North Druid Hills process, we would expect the long-range plan to be re-evaluated. If not, the County Planning staff will propose a re-evaluation of this area in another year, as part of their annual update of the Comp Plan.

Q: How is new development planned at Executive Park going to affect the Sembler project? Has it been considered?

AGA: We have been working with Executive Park throughout this process to ensure that their plans mesh with the proposals we have been making, and their

latest proposal is almost identical to what we have proposed in terms of street layout and park land.

Q: Please now! A traffic light at Knob Hill Drive and North Druid Hills Road. Please!! It is a matter of literally life and death!

Gannon, Rader: We will refer this to the DeKalb Transportation Dept.

Q: How will this project impact the value of my property and its resale value? Some of us don't have 25 years to find out, and this project has a direct impact on my nest egg – i.e., my home.

AGA: Property values are, of course, extremely difficult to predict, but we believe that the improvements we are proposing would dramatically improve the quality of life in this area, and that they would, as a result, have an extremely positive effect on property values.

Q: Kittredge is to be relocated to Nancy Creek Elementary. DeKalb School of the Arts needs new facilities but could be located anywhere in the county. Open campus could be located anywhere in the county. However, the high schools in north central DeKalb *need* a stadium in *this* area. Where would it be built?

AGA: We have not received any clear answer from the school board on this very important question. The commissioners have consistently urged the community to help us seek answers from the Board of Education.

Q: Kittredge, Open Campus, and DSA do *not* serve this community as it is. [The question] "If you close K, OC, and DSA, where will the kids go?" is therefore *not* a valid argument. The real question is, "What will happen to Lakeside, Oak Grove, Briarlake, and Hawthorne [schools?]?"

AGA: We urge concerned citizens to contact the school board about questions such as these. If the population of this area increases at a rate anything close to what the developers are proposing, it could have a significant impact on school capacity.

Q: Our tax money paid for the land and school buildings and stadium. Why is our board of education even considering selling them? Where will they find this much land in central DeKalb?

AGA: Again, we urge concerned citizens to contact the school board and make their concerns heard.

Q: Why not create a school of the arts campus, grades K-12, using the high school and elementary school buildings and the stadium for an outdoor performance facility and athletics?

AGA: This would have to be a decision made by the DeKalb County Board of Education.