

DRUID HILLS CIVIC ASSOCIATION  
P.O. Box 363  
Decatur, Georgia 3031

Dear Jeff and Kathie:

We understand that the BOC is working on revising the liquor laws “to encourage opportunities for economic development in overlay districts and mixed use developments.” The proposed ordinance lifts the current distance requirements between establishments where alcohol is consumed and churches and schools. Some of our residents in the established neighborhood on the edges of the development would have benefited from these requirements because they fell within the protected area. We are requesting an opportunity to discuss the proposed ordinance, preferably in a public neighborhood meeting, before it goes to the commission for a vote. In fact, the potential impact of the proposed ordinance warrants meetings in neighborhoods throughout the County.

While many of our neighbors have children who patronize the local church and schools, we will not presume to speak for these institutions that will no longer have distance restrictions to insulate them from establishments where alcohol is consumed. Instead, we will encourage those neighbors to express their concerns directly to the affected institutions and seek recourse through them. In the meantime, the DHCA will focus on the impact of the proposed ordinance on the quality of life in the immediately surrounding neighborhood.

For most of us, this is not a “temperance” issue. To the contrary, there were no arguments of that nature at our board meeting last Wednesday evening. We recognize that there is a diversity of views among our neighbors, many of whom enthusiastically embrace the idea of additional restaurants where alcohol may be consumed, and others who are concerned that unconstrained development may lead to undesirable late night bars and nightclubs, as well as numerous restaurants in a relatively small area. We have been told that there is no effective way to limit the number of restaurants, other than by market forces.

This is especially important to those who will live on the edge of the development without any buffer between their homes and these new establishments. There used to be a required buffer between single family residences and establishments where alcohol is consumed, but it was removed several years ago. As much as we enjoy the restaurants in Virginia-Highland, Buckhead or other entertainment districts, few of us would want to live next door to one upon considering the noise, dumpsters, increased automobile traffic, on-street parking blocking driveways, loud music, bright lights, nighttime deliveries, and increased pedestrian traffic.

While some of our neighbors are not bothered by this prospect, others believe that the former buffers between these establishments and residences in established neighborhoods (i.e., residences that are outside the overlay district) should be restored. A distance requirement for residences could be added to the proposed ordinance, and an assortment of related ordinances, taken together, might limit the proliferation of alcohol consumption establishments in the overlay district to a reasonable number of genuine restaurants. We need for our neighbors to be thoroughly briefed on these issues and given a chance to express their views.

We understand that there has already been a public hearing on this ordinance, and that the vote has now been deferred until June 9<sup>th</sup>. We urge you to announce and conduct public meetings to explain and discuss the impact of this ordinance throughout the County. If that is not possible, we wish that you would at least meet with Druid Hills residents for this purpose. We believe that it is imperative to initiate some legislative “transparency” on this issue.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Dick Shuey, President, DHCA