



Downtown Decatur Neighbors

June 12, 2015

Rebecca Shaw
President of the Board
Decatur Renaissance
230 East Ponce de Leon Avenue
Decatur, GA 30030

Dear Rebecca:

I write on behalf of the Board of the Downtown Decatur Neighbors in regard to the proposal to build a church atop the parking deck abutting Decatur Renaissance Condominiums.

As you likely know, Downtown Decatur Neighbors is a neighborhood organization for the thousands of Decatur residents who call Downtown Decatur home. We are fortunate to have one of your board members, Buddy Harrell, serving on our board as Chair of the Planning and Development Committee. DDN's primary goal is to ensure that quality of life issues, specifically those of relevance to downtown residents, are identified and addressed as our city continues to undergo rapid change and development.

We recognize that of all downtown residents, those living in Decatur Renaissance will be most impacted by any development atop the parking deck. For that reason, DDN's intention is to support the decision that you make in regard to whether to allow a church to be constructed on that site. As you make that decision, we hope that you will consider concerns that our board identified while discussing the matter.

PARKING – 1500 congregants (plus others in Sunday school and similar activities) will need a place to park. Our understanding is that there are 439 spaces available for the church in the deck. This will create a significant increase in demand for parking at a time when congregants at two nearby churches also are looking for parking. We do not find claims that congregants will take MARTA to be very credible, as there is little evidence of that happening at other Decatur churches.

IMPACT ON TAX BASE – Decatur has a very limited commercial tax base, which has contributed to some of the highest property taxes in the state (if not the highest). Development of office, commercial or dense residential atop the parking deck would contribute to this tax base while creating a limited increase in demand for city services. Development of a church will create similar demand for city services while contributing nothing to the tax base.

TRAFFIC – Downtown Decatur already is home to several churches, with the United Methodist and Presbyterian churches being in close proximity to your homes. Our understanding is that the sanctuary of the proposed church would accommodate 1500, which is much larger than either the Presbyterian (800) or the Methodist (800) church. Given that the vast majority of congregants will drive to church, there will be a significant impact on Sunday morning traffic.

POTENTIAL DEAD SPACE – while the proposed church would create a huge surge of activity on Sundays, it seems that it would create little if any activity on other days of the week. This would not contribute to

Decatur's vision of a vibrant and active downtown. Decatur's strategic plan calls for the development of parking lots into active uses, and the success of this plan has brought about the renaissance of downtown.

These may be some of the reasons why your covenant with the adjoining property owners prohibits the construction of a religious institution on the site. There may be other reasons that we are overlooking.

Thank you for considering the views of the board as you evaluate the proposed church and decide how you wish to proceed. We appreciate the sincere and thorough approach that you are taking as you consider the matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George Dusenbury". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "G" and a stylized "D".

George Dusenbury
President

Cc: Decatur City Commission
Peggy Merriss