November 14, 2005

To: Members of the Atlanta City Council

The National Association for Olmsted Parks (NAOP) strongly recommends that the City of Atlanta reconsider any plan that includes a parking deck in Piedmont Park. NAOP has sent letters to both the Mayor’s Task Force and the Atlanta Urban Design Commission expressing this opinion, which we formulated only after we convened an independent review panel to visit the site.

Our concern centers on the impact that such a large structure associated with bringing more cars into the park will have on the landscape. We believe this addition – while answering some very real parking needs – irreparably damages the design integrity and uses land intended for the public’s enjoyment of passive recreation with the result of ultimately diminishing some of the most important elements that give Piedmont Park its unique status in a busy urban setting: quiet and solitude.

Specifically, in the proposed plan the parking deck would intrude into and alter the intended picturesque scenery and character of the North Woods. Although there is an attempt to mitigate the visual impact of the parking deck by placing some levels underground and screening the upper decks with a planted berm, we feel this would ineffectively mitigate the impact and ultimately compromise any future efforts to rehabilitate the woodland. We are also concerned over a loss of vistas, which are identified as key elements of the park’s Olmsted design legacy.

We recognize the complex layering of Piedmont Park’s cultural landscape, which includes the Cotton States Exposition, the Olmsted Brothers plan of 1912, and the years of administration as a city park. We commend the 1995 Master Plan for addressing this historic character and making reference to the Olmsted principle of “suitability”: creation of designs that are in keeping with the natural scenery and topography of the site. We recommend that the 1995 Master Plan and its comprehensive Technical Document continue to guide rehabilitation of the park.

As a national organization dedicated to the preservation of the Olmsted design legacy for current and future generations, we promote these parks as part of our country’s cultural patrimony and consider major changes like introduction of a parking deck with the utmost concern.

Thank you for your consideration of this request to investigate alternative proposals.

Sincerely,

Lucy Lawliss
NAOP Co-Chair

Susan West Montgomery
NAOP Co-Chair