



METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

Member of Council

July 19, 2017

Mayor Megan Barry
1 Public Square, Suite 100
Nashville, TN 37201

Re: Proposed development in Fort Negley Park

Dear Mayor Barry,

We are writing about the Civil War African American encampment and graveyard at Fort Negley. We have seen photos and sketches from the period showing that the encampment was outside the fort on the southern slope of St. Cloud Hill. As was sadly typical for the time, the African American community both was impressed into service to build the fort and forced to live outside of Nashville on the exposed hill facing the direction from which a Confederate Army would advance.

The grounds of the fort, which originally included the limestone citadel on top of the hill, the surrounding protective stone bastions, and the African American encampment and graveyard, became Fort Negley Park and remains today under the control of the Metro Parks and Recreation Board. Fort Negley Park is pivotal to Nashville's African American heritage. As Tennessee State University history professor Dr. Bobby Lovett says, "This is a sacred site."

We recognize that the proposed private-public partnership would be a long-term lease and not a sale of Fort Negley Park land. We recognize that the proposed development calls for real-time archeology to identify and preserve physical remnants of Civil War-era activity and graves. However, we think this process has moved too quickly.

There is a strong argument that Fort Negley Park should be restored to be parkland. We all believe that Nashville should retain as much parkland as we can. If Nashville achieves its mass transit and urban density goals, having all of Fort Negley Park as greenspace will be invaluable.

Beyond that, given the history of race relations in Nashville, the South, and the United States, it is not acceptable to create a situation where the African American encampment or graves might be found at the front end of a bulldozer, even if there is an archeologist onsite to come over to investigate. By then, Nashville's options about what to do will be too limited. If development is to be considered at all, the better course of action would be to commission a proper study to locate the encampment and graveyard. The photos and sketches from the period should make this possible. Let's gather that information and share it with the public before any development option is considered. If this information is already available, please send us a copy.

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Nashville, Tennessee 37219

In summary, our initial position is that we would prefer to preserve large parks as parks instead of allowing private development – even under a long-term lease. In this situation, we believe that Nashville should study the impact of further development on the remains of the African American encampment and graveyard before moving forward with potential development.

As always, thank you for your consideration.



John Cooper
Metro Council, At-Large Member



Erica Gilmore
Metro Council, At-Large Member



Bob Mendes
Metro Council, At-Large Member



Sharon Hurt
Metro Council, At-Large Member



Jim Shulman
Metro Council, At-Large Member

Sources for photos and sketches reviewed:

<https://tennesseearchaeologycouncil.wordpress.com/2014/09/16/30-days-of-tennessee-archaeology-day-16/>

<http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/speccol/exhibits/civilwar/illustrations/fortnegley.jpg>

<http://www.bonps.org/wpr/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Ft-Negley-sketch.jpg>

<http://ww2.tnstate.edu/library/digital/FORT.HTM>

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/pan.6a00039/>