

FRIENDS ^{of} FORT NEGLEY

February 27, 2017

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TO: Mayor Megan Barry

The Friends of Fort Negley (FOFN), a 501c3, supports Fort Negley Park through fundraising, advocacy, and assistance with education and preservation programs. Part of our mission is to protect and enhance both the historic features and green space around the fort. As key stakeholders in decisions affecting Fort Negley Park, including the public park land that constitutes the Greer property, we feel compelled to speak out about the Request for Quotation 969636 (RFQ) dated January 23 by the Metro Finance Office.

In short, we are concerned that our views are not well-represented in the RFQ, despite our ongoing engagement over the past year in discussions about the future of the Greer tract. In addition, neither Metro Parks nor the Metro Historical Commission was adequately consulted in the preparation of the RFQ. This lack of communication concerns us, and is particularly disconcerting following multiple reassurances after the recent tree-clearing on Fort Negley hill that communication among Metro Departments, as well as with our Friends group, would be much better moving forward.

Here are our primary concerns regarding the RFQ:

- *We (FOFN) oppose handing over public park land for private development.*
- *We feel a responsibility to oppose this not only for Friends of Fort Negley but on behalf of all Metro Parks and their stakeholders because it would set a very bad precedent for the future. The Greer parcel is approximately 20 acres of park property and has been so since at least 1928.*
- *Fort Negley Park is incalculably important to Nashville's history with respect to the Civil War, African American emancipation, and as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project as well as to the current need for more green space as noted in the recent Plan To Play Master Plan. If land in the park is handed over to the private sector, damaged, or destroyed, the people of Nashville will not get it back.*

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- *The property is historically one park and to cite the lease to the Sounds as historical precedent is to adopt a 1970s Nashville philosophy to green space and historic preservation, not a progressive 2017 philosophy.*
- *We seek to protect the historical, archaeological, and geological features and significance of the site, including the Greer property, and call for a pause to conduct a Cultural Landscape Survey, as recommended by the Fort Negley Technical Advisory Board and the Metro Historical Commission.*

Right now, we have the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to preserve existing park land--a most precious commodity in our rapidly growing city--and we urge Metro to consider our talking points above and help us protect this park and its green space. (In truth, Fort Negley has been grossly neglected in its 150-plus year history, largely because it was a Union fort and because it was located in an historically African American neighborhood; certainly, the fort and surrounding park deserve greater consideration today than they have been given in the RFQ.) We have the opportunity to preserve green space, create a true community-centered park, and become a part of the greenway system. If the land is properly preserved and conscientiously developed, we would create a park that preserves an important part of Nashville and our country's history.

Finally, we ask that the Friends of Fort Negley be better informed and consulted. Our Board is comprised of archaeologists, geologists, historians, attorneys, local residents and other talented and civic-minded people who could be beneficial in the pursuit of a wise future for this site. We see Metro Parks, Metro Historical, the Mayor's Office, and Metro Council as partners in working to preserve the Fort and its surrounding Metro Park land.

In order to address our concerns, we request a meeting to include the Mayor's Office, Metro Parks, the Metro Planning Department, Metro Historical, and a representative from Metro Council.

Thank you for your consideration.

CC:

Office of the Mayor
Metro Council
Metro Planning Commission
Metro Historical
Metro Parks

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