



Dear Atlanta City Council Members,

**Regarding City of Atlanta Ordinance 21-O-0367  
On Behalf of the South River Forest Coalition  
9.06.2021**

**The South River Forest Coalition (SRFC)** is dedicated to improving quality of life, environmental, economic, and public health by means of the expansion of protected, public greenspace and connectivity in southeast Atlanta and southwest DeKalb County. The **SRFC strongly supports Atlanta first responders** getting world class training so they can be experts, decisive, level headed, and fair in crisis situations which they face daily. We understand this training occurs in classroom settings as well as re-enactment and experiential settings necessary for their instinctive responses.

SRFC, comprised of residents of the City of Atlanta and unincorporated DeKalb County, various civic, business, neighborhood, and environmental organizations, **supports the highest and best use of the former 300+ acre Prison Farm property for Atlanta communities as a core tract of green infrastructure** to be protected in-perpetuity as passive greenspace, for urban forest and ecological habitat restoration to protect the Intrenchment Creek and South River watersheds, for the development of an alternative transportation corridor, and for future public recreational use, as promulgated in the Charter of the City of Atlanta.

The **SRFC rejects the Atlanta Police Foundation's plan to locate and develop its public safety training facility at the Prison Farm**; recognizes the City has failed to document how the facility will improve police recruitment and retention or how the fast-tracking of the facility will address the current crime wave beyond providing political cover for shortcomings in leadership; and admonishes the City for the deficient methods it has used to disengage from a complete and equitable public interest review.

Therefore, and recognizing that the ~\$30 million in City funding needed to build the public safety training facility will be determined under the direction of a new Mayor and a new City Council through a separate and distinct budgeting process, the **SRFC demands that Council table the decision about leasing the Prison Farm to the Atlanta Police Foundation until the new elected and appointed leadership are installed.**

The communities of unincorporated DeKalb County that surround the Atlanta Prison Farm expect and deserve to be treated with the same respect as communities within Atlanta City Limits. **The development of 85 acres inside the City Limits should go through a robust community engagement process** – especially considering it reverses settled public policy, is



contrary to existing zoning, and imposes a local and regionally significant change in land use and watershed impacts.

The SRFC is keenly aware of the pressure on the City Council to act decisively. As such, we are prepared that the City Council may approve the lease of 85 acres of the Prison Farm to the Atlanta Police Foundation. **We therefore demand that Council regularly convene a Community Stakeholder Advisory Committee** comprised of members appointed by Council and the DeKalb County Commission, **to negotiate and approve a Community Benefits Agreement with the City of Atlanta** to ensure that promises are made specific, legally binding, and enforceable by the community before any lease agreement is entered into by the City of Atlanta.

**The Community Stakeholder Advisory Committee** shall be composed of a minimum of ten Atlanta Council and DeKalb Commission appointees who represent public safety officials, each of the adjacent neighborhood associations, economic interests, environmental and habitat conservation organizations of the broader South River Forest community. The Committee would engage with APF over the next several months and beyond in a thorough site plan review of all development impacts on its 85 acres, such as sound, smoke, night training activities, traffic, access, trash, loading, security, and lighting.

At a minimum, the **Community Benefits Agreement** shall include mitigation details for these and any impact to wildlife habitat, dark sky, tree canopy, native plants, and water quantity and quality. It will also specifically cover mitigation against dangerous conditions for surrounding communities from speeding police vehicles and anti-police protests as well as the promises made by the Atlanta Police Foundation during the three community engagement meetings (reference available recordings); the requests made by the adjacent neighborhoods during private meetings with DeKalb Commissioner Larry Johnson and/or representatives of the Atlanta Police Foundation (i.e., traffic light, mentorship programs, etc. – reference notes from those meetings); and, the conditions requested by the South River Forest Coalition on August 13 (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BmGvukPVsrzrOax27GexV7JMCREIt2w7/view>).

Respectfully,

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Co-Managers, South River Forest Coalition

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