



Founder  
Coretta Scott King

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June 08, 2020

The Honorable Keisha Lance Bottoms  
Mayor of Atlanta  
and  
Atlanta City Council  
55 Trinity Avenue SW  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Dear Mayor Bottoms and Councilmembers:

The news that the essential economic development program managed by the City of Atlanta to support the Sweet Auburn community's revitalization is in jeopardy calls to mind the work of my mother, Coretta Scott King.

Following my father's assassination, she worked tirelessly to lift-up his legacy. Well known are the formation of The King Center in pursuit of nonviolent social change; the recognition of a national holiday by the United States government; and engaging in peace and justice causes around the globe. Less well known is her work in the Sweet Auburn neighborhood where my father was born, raised and co-pastored. She intentionally located and developed The King Center on Auburn Ave. to bring attention to its historical significance as well as the importance of investing in the preservation and development of this important heritage that we call Sweet Auburn. As an outgrowth of her efforts, she founded and spearheaded the formation of the Historic District Development Corporation (HDDC), a not-for-profit community development corporation lead by the community to pursue the equitable and inclusive redevelopment, revitalization and preservation of the neighborhood that provided the context for that legacy to exist. HDDC's success and progress since 1980 is a testament to her original vision.

My mother was driven toward this mission because my father's legacy is embodied not only by the man – his work and actions - but also the Sweet Auburn neighborhood. To understand my father is to understand where he came from – Auburn Avenue in Atlanta, Georgia. A place where he witnessed a robust Black community characterized by financially thriving, civically engaged, educated, prayerful men, women, institutions and businesses of color. For scores of African American entrepreneurs, entertainers, community leaders, and residents, dreams came true on Auburn Avenue.

She understood from her husband that the Sweet Auburn community was the context for his unwavering believe that a Beloved Community was possible and deserved. That Black people must not be treated 'less than' when he had personally seen them as "more than". A community is more than the 'bricks and mortar' of a place, but the people and their lives contained within. Today, some of the 'bricks and mortar' remain

but it is hard to remember the optimism and hope that they should embody for future generations as they pursue their dreams.

My mother would be distraught to know that Atlanta is turning its back on the community that shaped her husband's outlook and inspired her to take up the cause of preservation and restoration. The success of the Black owned and lead not-for-profits (i.e. The King Center), churches (i.e. Ebenezer), community development corporations and building owners seeking to invest in and revitalize Sweet Auburn need YOUR support.

The hard and necessary work to ensure that Black communities that have been marginalized by generations of disinvestment, insensitive urban renewal efforts and systemic racism must have the support of their Mayor and the predominately African American city council.

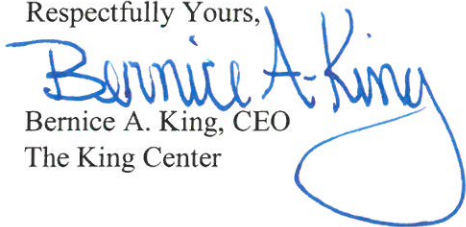
It will take real leadership during the current economic crisis to seek fair and equitable solutions to the difficult political, racial, and socio-economic situation our city finds itself in. Please accept that challenge and acknowledge that the public investments provided by the Eastside TAD are a critical component to fulfilling my mother's original vision and the best way forward on all fronts. Therefore, the city's budgetary solutions must not fall solely to the Eastside TAD.

The legacy of Sweet Auburn is one of leadership which supported, nurtured, and invested in its own community. Preserve the ETAD for its intended use and support its retention as an important tool for equitable community-oriented development in the very birthplace of our country's ongoing struggle for shared equity, rights and opportunity.

In closing, in 1966 when my mother approached then Mayor Ivan Allen Jr. about saving my father's birth home and all the other neighboring homes from the planned demolition by the City of Atlanta, Mayor Alan courageously stepped forward to prevent the demolition and supported my mother's efforts to preserve and revitalize that neighborhood. It was my mom's vision and hope that this would be the impetus to further and continuing investment, preservation and revitalization of the entire Sweet Auburn Ave corridor and its surrounding properties. In the spirit of Mayor Allen, who provided pivotal leadership for transforming a segregated Atlanta into a progressive new city, I challenge each of you to stand on the right side of history by ensuring that there is not divestment in a community that historically represented an oasis of freedom, justice and equality for African Americans. Political leaders can no longer boast about Atlanta being the home to the most famous civil and human right leader and yet refuses to truly invest in the long-term growth and development of the community that he called home. I stand in solidarity with those who have advocated for the preservation of the ETAD funding and pray that our collective appeal does not fall on deaf ears.

Thanking you in advance for your support and vote in favor of our position.

Respectfully Yours,

  
Bernice A. King, CEO  
The King Center