

February 1, 2022

Dear Members of the Georgia General Assembly,

As business leaders, we are writing to express our opposition to the Buckhead City legislation and ask for your consideration of our request.

Despite the challenges of a global pandemic, **the city of Atlanta and state of Georgia enjoy remarkable growth and success.** This includes major economic development wins and other exciting achievements. Much of **this success is due to the positive climate created by our state and local political leaders.**

Amid these milestones, Atlanta faces challenges as well. Some of these challenges, particularly incidents of violent crime, have grown over the last couple of years. This has fueled an effort by a vocal group to **extract a vital neighborhood from Atlanta** and create a Buckhead City.

As business leaders, we are significant stakeholders in this conversation. The signatories of this letter, many of whom are led by Buckhead residents, collectively represent approximately **\$4.7 billion of real estate value located in Buckhead** that accounts for approximately **\$57 million in annual property taxes** to the City of Atlanta. We represent large corporations, small business owners, entrepreneurs, and everything in between. While our companies are not voters, **we have a large, vested interest in the long-term prosperity of Buckhead, Atlanta, and Georgia.**

We have evaluated the proposal of a standalone Buckhead City. In doing so, we analyzed the merits and considerations of the plan and its impact on our employees, residents, customers, and guests. Our conclusion: the proposed **Buckhead City worsens many of the problems it aims to solve in Atlanta and simultaneously creates new issues across the state.** Here's why:

- **Doesn't Reduce Crime:** The spike in crime, particularly violent crime, is a serious concern in Buckhead, and across the state. However, Buckhead City would significantly weaken the City of Atlanta. The result will be more criminal behavior across the entire Metro region. Bad actors do not respect city limit signs. Buckhead will not be spared regardless of the size of the police force. A strong Atlanta is the path to a safe Buckhead.
- **Negative Brand Implications:** A Buckhead City will harm the brand of Buckhead, Atlanta and the state of Georgia. Our city is known for positive and productive collaboration among public leaders, residents, and the business community. It's the "Atlanta way." The initiative to carve up Atlanta casts history aside and divides the city. This will negatively impact economic development across Atlanta and Georgia.
- **Dangerous Precedent:** A neighborhood has never seceded from an existing city in the 250-year history of the state of Georgia. If this movement were successful, Buckhead City would be the first, but certainly not the last. Other neighborhoods in Atlanta and around the state would likely consider similar moves. Today, secession may be an Atlanta issue, but it would undoubtedly rear its head in Athens, Macon, Savannah, Augusta, and all around the state.

- **Higher, Duplicative Costs:** There would be increased upfront costs – from creating a city council, electing a new mayor, installing municipal courts and jails, buying city of Atlanta property, creating new municipal services and potentially funding Buckhead’s pro rata share of outstanding city of Atlanta municipal bonds. Residents and businesses in Buckhead would likely pay higher real estate taxes and incur more costly public services.
- **Public School Chaos:** A great public education system is key to attracting new investment into the state. As former Atlanta Board of Education Chair Jason Esteves has already previously outlined, Atlanta Public Schools (“APS”) owns all public schools in the Buckhead area, and the Georgia constitution prohibits the creation of a new school district. As a result, children in a proposed Buckhead City, by default, will either attend Fulton County schools, which are not equipped to take on 5,000 new students, or apply and pay tuition for an out of district spot in APS, subject to availability. Both are bad options for students.

Our newly elected **Mayor Andre Dickens is already acting on his pledge to prioritize public safety.** Mayor Dickens **announced a new police precinct in the heart of the Buckhead** and pledged support for a state-of-the-art public safety training facility for the Atlanta Police Department. **We are encouraged by the mayor’s early actions,** which highlight his commitment to reducing crime. **He deserves the time to succeed.**

The **lack of support for a Buckhead City from Atlanta City Hall, the Atlanta City Council or any state lawmakers representing Atlanta** should not be overlooked. If the General Assembly approves Buckhead City legislation against the will of local elected leaders, **the state of Georgia will undoubtedly be inundated with countless, divisive, and distracting referendums in the future.**

To that end, we respectfully request that the General Assembly **table the proposed legislation to create Buckhead City.** If the General Assembly is unwilling to do this, we request that the General Assembly **exclude the commercial district of Buckhead** from the proposed Buckhead City. Simply put, the **risk to our companies, employees, residents, and customers is too great** to bet our tax dollars on a start-up city with no experience.

**We choose Atlanta,** the Capital City of the proud State of Georgia.

Sincerely,

Alliance Residential  
 AMLI Residential  
 Atlanta Property Group  
 Atlanta Tech Village  
 Banyan Street Capital  
 Camden Property Trust  
 Coro Realty  
 Cortland  
 Cousins Properties  
 EDENS  
 Gables Residential  
 Grand Hyatt Buckhead

Granite Properties  
 Highwoods Properties  
 Jamestown LP  
 JLB Partners  
 JW Marriott Atlanta  
 Buckhead  
 LMC  
 MAA  
 Mill Creek Residential Trust  
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 Portman Holdings  
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Regent Partners  
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 The Ardent Companies  
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