



May 11, 2017

Mayor Megan Barry  
Office of the Mayor  
1 Public Square, Suite 100  
Nashville, TN 27101

Dear Mayor Barry,

I'm writing to express my concern about the redevelopment of the Greer Stadium portion of the Fort Negley Park property, the site of Nashville's only Civil War fort. In addition to its historic significance, this site holds special meaning in the African American community as hundreds, and maybe thousands, of impressed former slaves died constructing the Union fort in 1862. There's wide belief that their graves, unmarked, remain onsite.

As you are aware the Metro Nashville City Council passed RS2017-573 on March 8, 2017, which granted money to hire a consultant to complete a "Cultural Landscape Plan for Fort Negley." Given that this study will likely not be completed until spring of 2018 it seems radically premature to complete the RFQ committee process that will determine the development of the property until we all better understand the cultural significance of the property.

Nashville has a rare opportunity to add another signature park, on the scale of Centennial Park that would honor and instruct future generations about our struggle for freedom. In the words of an academic deeply familiar with this site, Zada Law:

In this moment, Nashville has the opportunity to reclaim the Greer portion of Fort Negley Park as useable parkland that honors the historic intent and use for which it was purchased...Moreover, the history embedded in the cultural landscape in and around Fort Negley Park connects to virtually all aspects of Nashville's rich and diverse historical past.

Given all that is at stake for the African American community only a deliberate and transparent process can hope to weigh the significance of this heritage site against the urge to develop it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Stevenson', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Bryan Stevenson  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice Initiative