

ADNA Update – Underground Atlanta

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Atlanta Downtown Neighborhood Association Board Votes to Withdraw Support for Demand Letter
Atlanta

ATLANTA – Since 1996, the Atlanta Downtown Neighborhood Association (“ADNA”) has worked to improve the downtown community for its residents, businesses, and visitors. ADNA’s efforts have focused on improving the neighborhood in the heart of the city through its nonprofit leadership, advocacy, social activities, community education. As part of these efforts, ADNA has closely monitored the City of Atlanta’s efforts to sell Underground Atlanta.

In early 2017, ADNA retained legal counsel to publicly voice its concerns regarding the City’s lack of transparency in the proposed sale of Underground Atlanta. To date, the costs to retain legal counsel have exceeded \$10,000 and resulted in a Demand Letter that was delivered to Mayor Kasim Reed and the Atlanta City Council. In response to the Demand Letter, ADNA and the City entered into continuing negotiations with the ultimate goal of increasing transparency and ensuring the community’s goals were heard and implemented in the proposed sale.

While the City did not agree to accommodate all of ADNA’s concerns, ADNA was successful in ensuring that the streets abandoned by the City, meaningful affordable housing requirements, as well as a public notice and modifications to the proposed development will require advertisement in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, plans to NPU-M, and a public comment period prior to approval by Invest Atlanta.

As a result of the Demand Letter and the threat of an impending legal action, the City was unable to close the withdrawal of the Demand Letter by ADNA. To that end, ADNA held a public meeting on March 1, 2017. ADNA’s legal counsel, Chris Collier of Williams Teusink, LLC, advised ADNA and the community as to the progress of negotiations. Mayor Reed and his staff were also present at the meeting and engaged the community to discuss the negotiations and the concessions made as a result. At the meeting, the ADNA Board voted to table the withdrawal of the Demand Letter.

After the meeting, the Board met with its counsel to discuss the urgency of this matter and upon advice of counsel held a special meeting in accordance with the notice requirements of its Bylaws. At the specially called meeting, the Board discussed the City’s concessions and the concerns of the community at length. While the Board operates with transparency in the process to date, the deadlines, threats of litigation by the City, and ongoing costs

counsel demanded an immediate response. After almost an hour of intense debate, a vote was called, an 5 to 4 to withdraw the Demand Letter and to continue its negotiations with the City. As a result of this vote ADNA ensured that the concessions made by the City would be upheld in a meaningful and enforceable manner.

While ADNA understands and shares the continued concerns of the community regarding this matter, the Demand Letter only ensured that the development would continue without the assurance of any comment. Withdrawal of the Demand Letter does not, and should not, be interpreted as the end of ADNA's involvement. The lack of transparency to date and what some members of the community view as a disconnect between the community and the developer. However, as Mr. Collier was quoted by the Atlanta Journal Constitution, "The development is moving forward and our concerns are not going away." Instead, ADNA believes that its efforts to influence and encourage community engagement were meaningfully achieved through the City's concessions and encourages the community to continue to engage the City, Invest Atlanta, the developer to voice its concerns with the redevelopment of downtown Atlanta. Additionally, the actions taken by the ADNA on this matter have thrust our organization and the neighborhood into a position of respect. Both public and private organizations are seeking the ADNA's input and advice on projects in our neighborhood.

ADNA and Mr. Collier will welcome public questions and comments at the April general body meeting on April 13th at 6:30pm at the Rialto Theater, 80 Forsyth St. regarding this matter. Going forward, the ADNA will continue to play an active role in opposing development that is inconsistent with the values and goals of the downtown community.

For additional information on the Atlanta Downtown Neighborhood Association's involvement with downtown Atlanta please see the general body meeting minutes from the March 14, 2017 meeting.

A recap of the ADNA Underground Atlanta vote can be found [here](#).

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ADNA Recap – Underground Atlanta

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