



Monday, April 4, 2022

Dear Honorable Durham City Leadership:

I hope that this email finds you all doing well. I am writing this email on behalf of the Hayti Reborn Community Action Council, a group of residents from Hayti's historic community that includes individuals from both public housing and single family housing, representing community members across all age ranges. As you will recall, both the City Council and County Commission, invested in Hayti Reborn a little more than a year ago (February 2021) with the charge of engaging the community in a deep process of planning for the Fayette Place site.

As some, perhaps all, of you are aware, we have been unhappy with the process that the Durham Housing Authority used to determine its selection for the Fayette Place site development. We have serious concerns about several aspects of how the Hayti Reborn proposal was treated in relation to scoring of the plan and lack of due process. We expressed these concerns through official protest and appeal processes directly to DHA, with both being denied. Of concern is what we consider to be DHA's lack of deep community engagement with those from the Hayti community on the site planning, DHA's insistence that community input is not welcomed or relevant until AFTER they have negotiated a final agreement, and mostly, the concern that out of 10 proposers, Hayti Reborn was the **ONLY** team not allowed to present its plan through interview to the DHA Review Committee prior to their selection.

For these reasons, and others that we are prepared to present, we are asking that the Mayor and Durham City Council intervene in this matter to simply give the Hayti Reborn plan its due process for consideration. In recent years the City Council has stated its commitment to addressing issues of past harm and racial inequity. This has been reflected through the implementation of a Participatory Budgeting process, the creation of the Racial Equity Taskforce, as well as adopting an intention of Shared Prosperity. We are requesting a **Participatory Development** process for Fayette Place, and an opportunity for the community to have their voices heard. Since DHA plans to enter into a 99-year land lease with a development partner, what happens on this project will impact the Hayti community for the next century.

Because of the high stakes for this transaction, and the fact that Hayti Reborn was not given an opportunity to share its plan with the DHA Review Committee – again the **ONLY** team not given that courtesy – we are asking for the City to intervene and give us that courtesy of due process.

Per the contract signed between the City of Durham and DHA/DVI on June 12, 2017 for the repurchase of Fayette Place (included with this email), the City Manager – and thus the City Council – will have the **FINAL** say on what development happens on the site.

**Item #4 of page 11 states:**

***DVI shall not develop, sell, convey or otherwise transfer the Site, or any part thereof or interest therein, without the prior written consent of the City Manager or his/her designee.***

We are asking that the Mayor and the City Council agree to our request for a Public Hearing (or more appropriately a “Public Healing”) allowing the Hayti Reborn plan to be shared publicly. We are asking that the public hearing be held as an opportunity for both the City Council and Durham residents to hear from the Durham Housing Authority, “Durham Community Partners” – the team selected by DHA, and the Hayti Reborn team. Though Hayti Reborn was the only team not allowed to present its plan, we feel it is only fair and equitable that all competing voices be heard.

***Specifically, we are peacefully, asking:***

1. *The Mayor, and her fellow City Council members, to intervene in the matter of Fayette Place and agree to support Hayti Reborn’s request for a public hearing (“Public Healing”) on this matter – and host this event in full view of the public;*
2. *The City Manager to be directed by the City Council to issue a “city injunction” on Fayette Place by asking DHA to immediately cease and desist any and all current negotiations with any organization on Fayette Place’s development, until this matter is fully settled through a public hearing; and,*
3. *The diverse public of Durham be allowed time and space to offer feedback to the City Council following a public hearing, on competing Fayette Place visions, but PRIOR TO DHA negotiating with a chosen developer and prior to the City Council offering a directive to the City Manager on assigning any written approvals to DHA of the development of Fayette Place.*

I do not have to remind the Council as to what is at stake with this transition. Whatever happens in regards to the development of the Fayette Place site will determine what happens to Durham’s Hayti community specifically, and Durham’s Black community more broadly, for the next 100 years – thus this Council’s actions will impact the next 5 generations of Black Durhamites. More directly, this Council’s actions will determine whether the next century will be spent re-creating wealth in Durham’s Black community or re-extracting wealth from Durham’s Black community.

I also do not have to remind the Council of the history of this specific property. Once the HEART of Hayti’s Black Wall Street before your long-ago predecessor Council made a promise to “build it back better” for the Black community. This land was taken from the community once before (1967), before the community was then asked to proportionately contribute – via \$4 million in taxpayer dollars – to its repurchase (2017). Thus, we only ask that before it is taken again (2022) that at least their voices be heard publicly by the Mayor, the City Council, and the City of Durham. A number of our Hayti Reborn Community Action Council members were actually in households

that were razed by the Durham Redevelopment Commission, who was formed in 1958 to drive urban renewal through Black Durham. After 64 years – don't these 70+ and 80+ year old elders deserve to have their voices heard? FINALLY? By someone?

Don't other members of our Hayti Community Action Council – those currently living in crumbling and dilapidated public housing – with their children and families, deserve to have their voices heard? FINALLY? By someone?

I have listened. I believe that this City Council should too. I would appreciate it. And I know they would appreciate it too.

The Durham Housing Authority has stated that the community-generated vision for the Fayette Place site was not worthy of listening to and consideration, and therefore they were justified in their singling out of Hayti Reborn's plan for dismissal. Since DHA would not give us the opportunity to answer those charged and defamatory accusations – we are asking the Mayor and the City Council to allow us to do so publicly – since these sentiments could have lasting and incredibly damaging effects on the community's work and reputation.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the United States Constitution provides every one facing an accusation the due process of: 1) an unbiased tribunal; 2) an opportunity to present reasons why the proposed action should not be taken; and, 3) the right to present evidence, including the right to call witnesses.

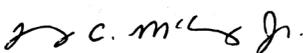
We are asking for a Public Hearing (and Healing) as an opportunity to publicly respond to these inflammatory claims by DHA, and we are asking the Durham City Council – and the residents of Durham – to serve as an unbiased tribunal.

As support for this requested Public Hearing, I am enclosing several attachments including: a) a copy of City of Durham/DVI 2017 contract; b) Hayti Reborn presented plan; c) letters of support for the project; and d) Hayti Reborn's (denied) submitted protest to DHA.

In closing, on behalf of Hayti Reborn's Community Action Council, and its many friends and supporters, we thank you for your generous consideration of this request.

On this anniversary of the 54<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, WE anxiously await your response to this sincere request.

In Service,



Henry C. McKoy, Jr., Ph.D.

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