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The Honorable Leonard Boyd Curry
Mayor of Jacksonville

The Honorable Tommy Hazouri
President, Jacksonville City Council

Dear Mayor Curry and City Council President Hazouri,

The following are but a few reasons why we cannot support the Lot J redevelopment deal the plan's backers seek to rush through a special session of the Jacksonville City Council:

- **The Mayor, Downtown Investment Authority, Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce, and the Jacksonville Civic Council failed to put the interests of Jacksonville residents first in the proposed Lot J redevelopment.** The Downtown Investment Authority abandoned its responsibility to consider whether the Lot J redevelopment deal is in the best interests of the City. DIA CEO Lori Boyer -- selected by a secret City Council vote that itself violated Florida's Sunshine Law -- has violated the Florida Sunshine Law with secretive boating junkets and other nonpublic meetings with the Lot J redevelopment backers. The Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce Office of Economic Development was caught using taxpayer dollars to promote a backroom deal for JEA, and its staff are now engaged in the same pattern of behavior to push the Lot J deal. Also, the Mayor and City Council should have never taken seriously the input of the Jacksonville Civic Council, a group of millionaires and billionaires with major conflicts of interest. As you recall, not long ago some of the Civic Council members represented companies seeking to buy JEA in another bad deal for city taxpayers. Many Civic Council members stand to financially benefit from this Lot J redevelopment deal at the taxpayer's expense. The same players rotate from board to board, following the money on one bad deal after another for Jacksonville taxpayers. The tremendous lack of transparency and impartial review at every step of the Lot J redevelopment deal is shocking and disqualifies the deal from serious consideration.

Moreover, the Mayor's threat to the Jacksonville community that the Jacksonville Jaguars NFL football team will leave if Lot J redevelopment is not approved is shameful. We have great respect for the Jaguars, but as taxpayers we must never be held hostage to the demands of any organization. Furthermore, the Mayor fails to note there is NO commitment from the Jacksonville Jaguars or the team's owner, Shad Khan, to keep the team in Jacksonville beyond 2030 even if the Lot J redevelopment deal is approved and paid for by the City.

- **The proposed Lot J redevelopment is a bad financial deal for Jacksonville taxpayers.** Contrary to the lofty promises of the Mayor, Council Auditor Kim Taylor disclosed during the Nov. 5, 2020 Council meeting the Lot J redevelopment would generate a return for Jacksonville of just 44 cents in revenue for each \$1 the city puts into the project. By any measure, this is a very poor negative return on investment for Jacksonville taxpayers. The true cost to the city for the proposed Lot J redevelopment is not the \$233 million figure claimed by the deal backers, but rather a total of \$365.8 million as the city must borrow most of the money, with interest, to pay for its part of the deal. The expense to the City in Lot J redevelopment should be greatly reduced so resources can be focused on improving quality of life for all Jacksonville residents.

Furthermore, the Lot J redevelopment proposal does not include an extension on the Jacksonville Jaguars stadium lease, meaning an already bad investment could get much worse if the team decides to leave the city in 2030.

- **The proposed Lot J redevelopment does not include veteran-owned businesses, small businesses, women-owned businesses, and minority-owned businesses, and will not address the city's chronic unemployment challenges.** Like the JEA sale fiasco, the Lot J redevelopment backroom deal shuts out many members of the Jacksonville community. The Lot J redevelopment presently has no legally binding obligations to include historically disadvantaged businesses or to recruit workers from Jacksonville neighborhoods with high levels of chronic unemployment.
- **The only people who stand to benefit from Lot J redevelopment are the rich and well-connected.** Jacksonville Jaguars owner Shad Khan has a net worth, by most estimates, over eight billion dollars. Khan and the other Lot J redevelopment backers do not need hundreds of millions of dollars from the city taxpayers.

Sadly, this backroom deal is also the latest chapter in the book of broken promises handed to Jacksonville's Northside, Westside, and Arlington residents since city-county consolidation. The commitment to increased economic opportunities for all of Jacksonville's neighborhoods has never been properly fulfilled since the 1968

consolidation. The continued failure to deliver on the promises of consolidation has led to blighted neighborhoods and unprecedented crime rates. Despite the Mayor's campaign promise to make public safety his #1 priority, Jacksonville residents are experiencing more crime than ever before. It is frustrating to witness this attempt to enrich millionaires and billionaires with taxpayer dollars while many Jacksonville residents live in poverty and fear for their safety.

Given the improper conduct by the Downtown Investment Authority and other agencies, numerous egregious violations of the Sunshine Law, and the conflicts of interest of multiple public officials in connection with Lot J redevelopment, I am calling for a prompt and thorough investigation of the Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce Office of Economic Development, the Downtown Investment Authority, and the Mayor's Office by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. A federal investigation with respect to any federal funds used in connection with this backroom deal is also appropriate. The Jacksonville Civic Council must also be immediately disbanded so Jacksonville residents are finally the priority in economic development plans.

Regards,



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President, Jacksonville Branch

NAACP