

Isaiah Rumlin
President

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

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Roger S. Goodell
Commissioner of the National Football League
345 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10154

Dear Commissioner Goodell,

This year has witnessed unprecedented public outrage against injustices against Black Americans in the aftermath of the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. In June 2020, the National Football League committed \$250 million over the next ten years as part of its efforts to combat systemic racism and support the battle against injustices faced by Black Americans. While this commitment is laudable, the NFL's efforts to advance racial justice must include the actions of the League, its leadership, and its team owners when engaging local communities. The NFL's commitment is apparently ringing hollow in the City of Jacksonville, Florida, and I am appealing to you to ensure the League acts swiftly to rectify an injustice presently underway in our community.

The Lot J redevelopment deal proposes to give Jacksonville Jaguars owner Shad Khan a \$65 million interest-free grant and would cost the city over \$365.8 million in mostly borrowed funds. According to the city's Council Auditor, 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. Multiple Jacksonville public officials, and the deal's wealthy backers, have deliberately flouted proper oversight and accountability at every step. As reported by the Florida Times-Union, Shad Khan hosted multiple City Council members on his yacht to discuss Lot J redevelopment in violation of Florida's Sunshine Laws. Moreover, Jacksonville Mayor Lenny Curry has issued shameful threats to the community that the Jacksonville Jaguars NFL football team will leave if Lot J redevelopment is not approved. We have great respect for the NFL and the Jacksonville Jaguars, but we must never be held hostage to the demands of any organization.

A majority of Jacksonville residents -- 54% strongly oppose the Lot J redevelopment deal, and a strong majority -- 80% -- support putting the question before the voters in a referendum. Shad Khan and other wealthy backers are trying to railroad the deal through our City Council in the next few weeks, hoping to force approval instead of addressing the deal's serious shortcomings.

The same backers of the Lot J redevelopment deal were recently involved in another backroom effort to strip Jacksonville of another important City asset -- the Jacksonville Electric Authority (JEA). In 2018 the Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce, Jacksonville Civic Council, and the Mayor's Office devised another backroom deal that undervalued the JEA and proposed to enrich the deal's backers -- many of whom had serious conflicts of interest given their roles in deal oversight and review -- by hundreds of millions of dollars. The JEA sale would have forced devastating energy price hikes on hundreds of thousands of struggling Jacksonville residents. The same pattern of bad behavior is continuing with the same stakeholders, and it is shocking to see Shad Khan and Mark Lamping joining lobbyists, developers, and self-dealing civic leaders to exploit Jacksonville residents.

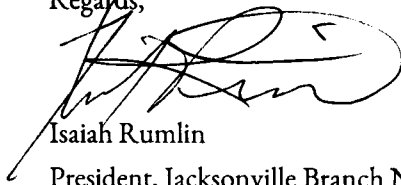
I must also point out the Lot J redevelopment deal is but the latest chapter in the book of broken promises handed to Jacksonville's Black residents since city-county consolidation. The commitment to increased economic opportunities for all of Jacksonville's neighborhoods has never been properly fulfilled since the 1968 city-county consolidation. The continued failure to deliver on the promises of consolidation has led to blighted neighborhoods and unprecedented crime rates, especially in predominantly Black neighborhoods. Jacksonville has some of the most pervasive systemic racism problems in the United States, and today remains a "tale of two cities" with startling disparities between White and Black residents. It is frustrating to witness this latest attempt to enrich millionaires and billionaires with taxpayer dollars while many Jacksonville residents live in poverty, fear for their safety, and suffer disproportionate impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Lot J redevelopment plan strips Jacksonville of hundreds of millions of dollars needed to keep vulnerable families in their housing during the pandemic, and to combat our city's chronic unemployment and homelessness challenges.

The Jacksonville Branch of the NAACP has called for an investigation by the Florida Bureau of Law Enforcement and US Department of Justice into the potentially unlawful activities regarding the Lot J redevelopment plan. In response to this outrageous situation, I respectfully ask that you intervene on behalf of the NFL and the people of Jacksonville to immediately withdraw any support of the NFL, and the Jacksonville Jaguars, from the current Lot J redevelopment deal.

While the idea of Lot J redevelopment may be a worthwhile endeavor, any plan must be fair to Jacksonville residents, and follow the City's proposal and accountability processes. I also ask that you develop and implement new NFL policies and practices to ensure the League and team owners will never again seek to unfairly enrich themselves at the expense of the local communities.

Thank you for your urgent consideration of this matter.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Isaiah Rumlin', written over a horizontal line.

Isaiah Rumlin

President, Jacksonville Branch NAACP