April XX, 2017

Dr. Mark P. Becker

President

Georgia State University

P.O. Box 3999  
Atlanta, GA 30302-3999

Mr. Scott Taylor

President

Carter and Associates, LLC

171 17th Street NW  
Suite 1200  
Atlanta, GA 30363

RE: Equitable Stormwater Management and the Redevelopment of Turner Field

Dear Dr. Mark Becker and Mr. Scott Taylor,

On behalf of American Rivers, we would like to thank you for investing in the communities around Turner Field. We are optimistic about the myriad ways in which this redevelopment could revitalize the neighborhoods of Summerhill, Mechanicsville, Peoplestown, and Pittsburgh for current residents and for the City of Atlanta as a whole. We appreciate your participation and engagement thus far in your efforts to create an amazing development for Georgia State University while simultaneously addressing critical and persistent local issues such as flooding. We write to you now in order to highlight the results of our stormwater feasibility assessment that was part of the Stadium Neighborhoods Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) plan. The stormwater improvements proposed by Carter in the Summerhill Community Investment Plan will provide benefits to downstream communities, but they are not adequate. **We** **write to request that you incorporate the LCI’s stormwater and wastewater recommendations into the Turner Field redevelopment**.

American Rivers is the leading advocate for healthy rivers nationally, and we have been working with the City of Atlanta’s Green Infrastructure Task Force for several years to help implement the City’s green infrastructure ordinance. We served on the LCI Core Team in order to provide thoughtful and robust stormwater recommendations that are rooted in quantitative data analysis as much as they are based on the priorities of the community. **We have engaged with community members over the last two years, helping them craft ambitious but achievable goals for stormwater management and flood remediation as part of the redevelopment** described in the LCI Plan[[1]](#footnote-1).

Communities across the country are embracing green stormwater infrastructure as a way to begin addressing historic environmental injustices that have led to the persistent flooding and displacement of low-income families and communities of color. The critical and persistent stormwater issues in the neighborhoods around Turner Field are in large part a result of the cycle of urban redevelopment that transformed thriving urban neighborhoods into one criss-crossed by highways, filled with parking lots and lacking jobs and basic amenities. Flooding is commonplace and sewage overflows into the streets and homes of Peoplestown residents during heavy rains. Considering the history of these neighborhoods, **it is imperative that** **Georgia State University and Carter address the historic injustices of past development**, and redevelop in a way that serves both the present and future residents of the neighborhoods—**creating a vibrant, green, and thriving urban community for all**.

American Rivers’ stormwater feasibility assessment focused on the Core Area redevelopment site and the adjacent highways, and determined that there is significant potential to manage stormwater with green stormwater infrastructure such as bioretention, rainwater harvesting cisterns, and permeable pavers. The benefits attributed to GSI include: reducing persistent flooding, generating local jobs, increasing property values, creating educational opportunities, lowering the urban heat island, reducing energy use, improving air quality, improving aesthetics, reducing noise pollution, fostering community cohesion, and adapting to climate change. As part of our feasibility assessments, we discovered that by capturing the first 1.8” of rainfall where feasible, 2.3 million gallons per storm event could be captured from the Core Area, and another 1.3 million gallons per storm event from the adjacent interstates—this is **more than five Olympic sized swimming pools, or 72,000 bathtubs full of water that could be removed from the undersized sewer system**, per storm.

Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), in partnership with Central Atlanta Progress, has already committed significant funding to realizing the stormwater vision presented in the LCI, and begun designing a pilot green stormwater infrastructure project in the Downtown Connector/I-20 interchange consistent with our recommendations. Today, we write to respectfully request that you consider a similar effort—not out of any regulatory requirement—but rather because of the benefit to your bottom line, and your interest in being a good neighbor. And while GDOT is voluntarily committing hundreds of thousands of dollars to achieve the LCI’s vision for stormwater, **Georgia State University and Carter could potentially meet the LCI’s performance standard for stormwater without spending any extra money,** largely due to the fact that Atlanta has the second highest water rates in the country.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Universities across metro Atlanta are embracing green stormwater infrastructure as a cost-effective approach to managing wet weather. Georgia Tech has adopted **a plan for 180 acres that captures stormwater above and beyond Atlanta’s requirement** **because it was cheaper than compliance**,[[3]](#footnote-3) including the largest rainwater harvesting cistern on a U.S. college campus.[[4]](#footnote-4) Emory University has one of the largest green building inventories among American universities, and is nationally acclaimed for their state-of-the-art WaterHub[®](http://sustainablewater.com/waterhub/).[[5]](#footnote-5) **A rainwater harvesting system in Atlanta can pay for itself in less than three years**,[[6]](#footnote-6) and a wastewater recycling system such as a **WaterHub**[**®**](http://sustainablewater.com/waterhub/) **could** **save Georgia State University millions of dollars over a 20-yr period with zero upfront cost**.[[7]](#footnote-7) Incorporating these practices into the redevelopment of the Turner Field neighborhoods would benefit Georgia State University, Carter, and the fabric of the community itself.

American Rivers believes that the health of our communities and the health of our environment are interconnected—neither can be effectively improved without a focus on both. Thank you for giving serious consideration to the implementation of the LCI’s stormwater recommendations. Such an effort would truly reflect Georgia State University’s commitment to “be a leader in understanding the complex challenges of cities and developing effective solutions”[[8]](#footnote-8) and Carter’s “integrity…to do what’s right.”[[9]](#footnote-9) **We would welcome the opportunity to further discuss this critical component of the Turner Field redevelopment**, please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or to arrange an in-person meeting.

Sincerely,

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1. <http://www.stadiumneighborhoodslci.org/the-lci-plan> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/rain-soaked-seattle-has-nations-highest-water-bills/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://space.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/images/stormwatermasterplan-basina.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.atlantawatershed.org/greeninfrastructure/rainwater-harvesting-workshop-9162013/?showMeta=2&ext=.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://sustainability.emory.edu/page/1009/water-conservation> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.atlantawatershed.org/greeninfrastructure/rainwater-harvesting-workshop-9162013/?showMeta=2&ext=.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <http://www.campserv.emory.edu/fm/energy_utilities/water-hub/> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <http://strategic.gsu.edu/files/2016/04/Strategic-Plan-Update-2016-Senate-Approved.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <http://www.carterusa.com/> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)