

From: Julie Montanea <info@sg.actionnetwork.org>
Sent: 2/10/2022 2:57:51 PM
To: dcampbell@ashevillenc.gov
Cc:
Subject: The East End/Valley Street community is entitled to a track at Memorial Stadium

City Manager Deborah Campbell,

Dear City Council and City Manager Campbell,

I am writing to ask that you follow through on the City's Parks and Recreation Plan and promises made to the East End/Valley Street community to provide a recreation facility within their neighborhood. I urge you to allocate American Rescue Plan funds toward construction of a track at Memorial Stadium.

As a retired public health professional, I know the dramatic health benefits of regular physical activity. And it doesn't take an advanced degree to know that close proximity, ease of access, and a welcoming environment are essential to establish that good health habit. Decades of research have given evidence that systemic racism is a primary factor in the huge and pervasive disparities in health status between Black and White Americans. Inequitable public investment in recreational facilities is one element of that systemic injustice.

Talk of reparations and racial equity comes cheap. It is time for the City to follow through on its promises to the Black community regarding the track at Memorial Stadium. As a White resident of the City, I would far prefer we make this investment than the \$1.5 million spent last fall for Sweeten Creek Road acreage sold by Carolina Day School. Sure, it was a good real estate deal, we all love preserving undeveloped green space, and I'm sure the school saw itself as a generous community benefactor. But which community benefits? What a classic example of privileged entitlement! A poor neighborhood like the East End doesn't own a carrot it can dangle in front of the City, and so its needs keep getting pushed to the back of the queue.

I join with East End/Valley Street community members and call for the City to improve Memorial Stadium in ways that support neighborhood use. Please set aside American Rescue Plan funds to:

- *Build a 6 lane track around the entire field for neighbors to use for regular exercise
- *Reduce the field by 6 yards (this still being FIFA compliant)
- *Remove bleachers from the far side and only have bleachers on the side closest to McCormick Field
- *Create a parking plan for Memorial Stadium

Thank you for hearing the concerns of East End/Valley Street neighbors and for following through on adopted City Plans and your promises to our African American community. I ask

that you commit to racial equity in all of your decisions. And finally, thank you for your service to our community.

Respectfully yours,
Julie Montanea

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