



## Housing Authority of the City of Decatur, Georgia

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TTD/TTY 1-800-545-1833 Ext 852  
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July 20, 2020

Dr. Kebede Gessesse (Professor)  
General Secretary of the Administrative Board  
Kidist Mariam Ethiopian Orthodox Church  
Lithonia, Georgia.

**RE: 266 Robin Street, Decatur, Georgia**

Dear Dr. Kebede Gessesse:

I wanted to directly reach out to you and all of the other members of the Administrative Board to request your consideration for the sale of the land at 266 Robin Street, Decatur, Georgia 30030 owned by the Kidist Mariam Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Inc. (Church). Please share this letter with all the Administrative Board members as soon as possible.

I am the Executive Director of the Housing Authority of the City of Decatur, Georgia (Decatur Housing Authority). Our mission is to serve low income families by providing quality, affordable housing in neighborhoods of opportunity and hope. We understand that your Church also serves low income families in its various outreach ministries.

I know that you are aware that the Decatur Housing Authority seeks to purchase the land and buildings at 266 Robin Street, Decatur, Georgia. We are the neighbors to your property, and in fact, our affordable housing property surrounds your church property on all sides. By relocating our operational offices to this site, our services can be more efficiently located with our residents and clients. We hope that you would agree that the Decatur Housing Authority would be an appropriate purchaser of this property and that we could better serve our families from this site.

You pointed out that the members of your church are involved in an unfortunate internal conflict related to the leadership and operations of your church. A church can be a place of joy, love, community, and hope. Struggles for control and leadership are very painful. I have been through a church separation in my life. It was a painful and unpleasant situation during which many of my friends and I were hurt. We wish you the best of luck in resolving this matter, and we do not wish to get into the middle of this conflict. We do not know which side is right or wrong in this dispute, so we are hoping to have agreement on this one matter that truly benefits all parties involved. We would like you to consider our request to purchase this property at this time.

We understand that the Robin Street land is collateral for a loan that was originated by the Bank of North Georgia for the Church to build a new church facility located at in Lithonia. We have offered a negotiated price of \$700,000 for the property. We conducted an appraisal that revealed a much lower value, but we increased our offer in recognition of the benefits to all parties involved (considering the extensive challenges of the site described below). We are prepared to pay immediately for the land and buildings. Due to the lien on the property and related loan documents, we know that you are aware that 100% of the proceeds of the sale would be controlled by the Bank (or its successors) to pay down the debt on the church in Lithonia. The Bank would likely have 100% control of these funds at the point of sale.

The Decatur Housing Authority would like to purchase the land and buildings at 266 Robin Street now. We ask your positive consideration of this request for the following reasons:

1. **Settle Church Debt** - Sale of the land would allow the overall Church to reduce the debt owed for the current building which would be in the best interest of all parties who worship at the Kidist Church now and into the future. The Church would benefit substantially from this debt reduction.
2. **Benefits the Decatur Housing Authority** - The Decatur Housing Authority would benefit from being able to build on the site now while the current renovation is underway for the 98 units of Swanton Heights (the property next door).
3. **Benefits Low-income Residents** – The low-income residents of the Decatur Housing Authority would benefit from the centralized location of our offices and service facility located on the property. It will be very convenient for families to reach our offices and secure services.
4. **Alternative Sites – Further delay in the sale of the 266 Robin Street property would require that the Decatur Housing Authority locate another site for its office facilities, instead of purchasing this property.** We have been waiting for over a year to purchase the site. While we desire this location, we must move forward with securing an alternative site for our offices. We will be required to relinquish our interest in this site.
5. **Difficulties in Sale of the Land** - There are numerous challenges to trying to sell this this parcel of land to other parties that can be overcome by selling to the Decatur Housing Authority now.
  - a. It will likely be hard to sell this extremely small parcel of land (.42 acres) to alternative developers. Due to the location of the property in the center of a 100% affordable rental community and lacking sufficient land for parking, it will be extremely difficult to sell the site for homeownership or commercial purposes. In addition, the land zoning is institutional which would require a rezoning by a private developer to multifamily, commercial, or homeownership. That zoning designation would be very hard to secure.
  - b. The vacant church at 266 Robin Street has insufficient parking for a viable future congregation. This makes the church nonviable and the value of the property is substantially diminished below the level of the current appraisal.
  - c. The basement at 266 Robin Street is flooding with each rainstorm. This means that ground water is near the surface and that future construction on this site must address this

flooding. The construction will have to have special consideration of this flooding as well as specialized stormwater detention that addresses the ground water. This specialized stormwater detention, as well as the specialized vertical construction requirements, will vastly increase construction costs on the site and thereby diminish the value of the land. An engineer's report on the ground water has been completed and verifies that the ground water is an impediment to future construction.

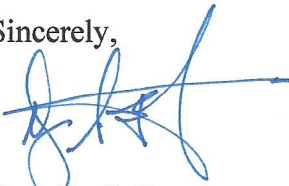
- d. Stormwater Pipe Easement - There is a 36" reinforced concrete stormwater pipe (RCP) that runs through the center of the site from south to north. If any new construction is to occur in the future by DHA or any other buyer, then the buyer of the property would have to pay to relocate this 36" reinforced concrete pipe that is buried about ten feet deep to one side of the property at a cost of approximately \$200,000. A survey has been completed to verify that the pipe is present. This stormwater line vastly diminishes future property value.
- e. Market Conditions - With the COVID-19 / Coronavirus, there is substantial economic uncertainty in the real estate market. This instability causes a reduction in the number of potential buyers for this parcel making a future sale more challenging for the Church.

We ask that you and the other members of Administrative Body of the Church consider our request to allow the sale of the property to proceed now. Delaying the sale is detrimental to the Decatur Housing Authority, our residents, and the overall Decatur community since the Robin Street property is in disrepair. We believe the sale is in our all our best interests and would result in positive outcomes for all involved.

**Please consider providing a release to the Decatur Housing Authority so that we may proceed with the purchase and pay down your mortgage on the Lithonia Church property. Otherwise, please understand that we will have to immediately look for other locations for our office facilities and resident services. As a result, we cannot wait more than a few more months to purchase this site.**

If you have any questions, please feel free to give me a call at 404-270-2158 (direct line) or you may email me at [dsf@decaturha.org](mailto:dsf@decaturha.org). We look forward to your favorable consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Douglas S. Faust  
Executive Director