



The Truth About The Proposed Public Safety Training Center

The long-term lease for City of Atlanta's proposed Public Safety Training Center for Atlanta Police and Fire departments comes to a City Council vote on Aug. 11. These FAQs clarify issues and concerns.

1 Where will the Institute be located?

The city has identified 150 acres of a 380-acre parcel of land it has owned for 100 years in unincorporated DeKalb County. The parcel is the original site of the Police and Fire departments' training centers and has been in continual use for outdoor tactical training for Atlanta's public safety agencies for more than 50 years. It is located outside City limits in an area zoned for industrial use. The parcel's border is 500 yards from the closest residential housing.

2 Why can't it be built on fewer acres?

Consolidating training needs for police and fire in one location is essential for effective management and inter-agency coordination. The City needs a site that can accommodate the necessary facilities required to effectively train 21st century law enforcement agencies responsible for public safety in a major urban city: 12 acres alone for an Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (to train fire fighters to drive the big fire engines and police to train for those instances where they must give chase to vehicles), a mock cityscape, burn buildings, 40 acres of stable and pastureland for the Mounted Patrol and a kennel for K-9 force. The existing stables and kennel are barely adequate for humane treatment of these animals.

3 Why this site? Are there other places the training center could be built?

The Administration went through an exhaustive review of City-owned properties before settling on the Key Road site. It is the only parcel owned by the City that is large enough to accommodate police and fire department training needs. Even if an alternate site controlled by a private entity could be identified, assembling it for development would take decades and present taxpayers with an unwarranted financial burden when compared to utilizing an existing City-owned asset.

4 Why are new training facilities needed?

Morale, recruitment and retention suffer when our public servants who put their lives on the line must be trained in sub-standard facilities that fail to meet the training needs required of a major urban law enforcement agency. Attracting new recruits is an uphill battle, at best, when the existing training facilities are sub-standard.

- Reversing the trajectory of public safety is dependent on staffing our agencies to their full complement of authorized officers.
- The Key Road plan is a giant leap from the sub-standard training facilities of today to state-of-the-art facilities

that will meet modern Atlanta's complex public safety training needs for the next 40 years.

- Atlanta Fire Rescue abandoned its decrepit training facility last year and now trains in borrowed facilities in Douglas County. APD moves from its obsolete and decaying training center to leased space at Metropolitan State College – a temporary, two-year lease. The leading city in the South, home to the region's largest police and fire departments, has no permanent training facility for its law enforcement agencies.
- Our citizens rightfully demand policing excellence. The City's obligation is to ensure that we provide the resources and training that enable our law enforcement officers to adhere to the high professional standards we expect.

5 Is the Key Road Training Center site an extravagant and unnecessary taxpayer expense?

Not in the least. The City selected land it has owned for a century, but which has sat dormant for 40 years. The private sector has committed \$40 million, contingent on City-approval of a long-term lease, to fund the first phase of construction. The long-term lease will finance the remainder of the development costs. In the best tradition of Atlanta's public/private partnerships, this arrangement will save taxpayers \$40 million and leverage an unused City-owned asset for an urgent need: public safety amid an unprecedented rise in violent crime.

6 But aren't you cutting down acres and acres of trees?

Absolutely not. As aerial photographs (available on our website) show, the 150-acre parcel we've identified does not contain significant tree cover. The site was previously the City's Honor Farm, and the land was clear cut for crops decades ago. In addition, the City long ago approved a treeless utility easement some 50-foot-wide, that runs the length of the property.

Arborists have confirmed that tree cover today on this parcel is overwhelmingly dominated by invasive species. It is devoid of thick forest and hardwood trees. Yet we have committed to replace any hardwood tree destroyed in construction with 10 new hardwoods and replace any invasive species tree with a new hardwood planting.

7 Are you ignoring the historical import of the long-shuttered Honor Farm?

We will install a permanent exhibit to commemorate the Honor Farm, whose original intent was an early 20th century experiment to replace incarceration with rehabilitation founded on the dignity of work. This exhibit will underscore APD's reinvigorated commitment to inculcate officers' respect for the civil and human rights of the citizens they protect.

Please visit AtlantaPoliceFoundation.org for more information. ■

The Atlanta Police Foundation is a non-profit organization supported by the private sector, the philanthropic community and individuals whose goal is to make Atlanta the safest large city in the nation.