



July 12, 2024

Members of City Council
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St Petersburg, FL 33701

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Councilman R. Floyd, District 8, richie.floyd@stpete.org

RE: Improving the revised agreements for the Historic Gas Plant Redevelopment and Rays/Hines Stadium Deal

Dear Councilmembers,

Thank you for your continued leadership to ensure that St. Petersburg continues to be a diverse and vibrant City that is guided by principled progress, transparency, and a model for accountable and responsible government.

Having been actively participating in the process to redevelop the Historic Gas Plant District (HGPD) and develop the new Stadium, we are pleased to see progress being made to improve the agreements. We are certain that additional specifications must be added to the agreement in order for them to be approved.

Below we summarize our key areas of concern and provide specific references to where certain agreements need improvement:

Stadium Development and Funding Agreement

1. Energy footprint can and should be net zero or positive for the Stadium and its associated facilities. Use photovoltaic panels to produce enough power to fully offset the power used annually by the Stadium and its associated facilities. Net zero energy use

has been achieved at Seattle's arena and doing it for this stadium will directly reduce the ongoing operating expenses of these facilities, and is consistent with the city's Integrated Sustainability Action Plan (ISAP).

2. Building the Stadium to withstand a Level 5 Hurricane. Currently "the Stadium will be designed to meet all Risk Category III Building requirements of the Florida Building Code." Given the objective to build an iconic stadium that will last 90 years, combined with the reality of increasing frequency and strength of tropical storms, it is simply prudent to take these buildings to a higher standard than present code. Given rising insurance costs, building to a higher standard will result in long term operating cost reduction.
3. Battery capacity equal to the minimum energy requirements to operate the facility during an emergency. Given the fact that [40% of St Petersburg is in the Coastal High Hazard Area](#), combined with a significant percentage of Pinellas County residents living at or below the average median income, this facility must be designed and built to operate as an emergency shelter. Meeting this level of battery storage prepares us to deal with an event that is highly likely to occur over the life of this building.

Historic Gas Plant District Redevelopment Agreement

1. The revised agreement language continues to be only aspirational where specific measurable language is needed. While specific sections are highlighted below, the use of "targeting" and "promoting" as the active actions which are required to be taken falls short of having quantifiable and measurable results. Trust is simply not enough, it must be verifiable as well.
2. The increase in Open Space to 12 acres at a minimum with a target of 14 acres is welcome. However, given the need to restore and highlight the natural environment around Booker Creek and the full Historic Gas Plant District, specific tactics should be required to ensure this space is effective for flood mitigation and adds to the inventory of natural areas throughout our community.
3. All new construction must be developed to minimize the energy footprint and maximize the resilience of the redevelopment area by designing to specific sustainability building standards.

When the Gas Plant District was taken from its occupants, the City made specific promises that were not kept. Access to generational wealth was lost. We can not allow the same cycle of broken promises to occur again. Only through specific contractual obligations can we ensure that the neighborhood, the Rays/Hines partnership, and the greater communities of St Petersburg, Pinellas County and the Tampa Bay region all benefit.

Specific Contractual Opportunities

Stadium Development and Funding Agreement

Article 7 Scope of Development of Project Agreements

Section 3 Design Documents and Design Standards

Subsection c Project Improvements Specifications and Design Standards

Part v

Item B – New language for consideration - *StadCo will use good faith, commercially reasonable efforts to achieve LEED Platinum certification for the Stadium as the Target Development Plan and LEED Gold as the Minimum Development Requirement.* The Rays/Hines team is working with world class designers and developers who have designed and built to these standards previously. Additionally, while upfront development costs may be higher, long term operating expenses will be lower resulting in cost savings to the Rays over the lifetime of the agreement/stadium.

Item D – New language for consideration - *StadCo will develop plans and install sufficient photovoltaic installations to generate a minimum of 100% of the expected annual energy usage of the Stadium and related facilities.* The Stadium and related facilities will be operating in the Sunshine City in the Sunshine State 100% of the time. The Stadium will only be operated a percentage of that time.

Generating enough power on site to exceed the power used to operate the Stadium is a low threshold and will result in lower operating costs to the Rays while also assisting the City in achieving its energy goals as outlined in the ISAP.

Item F – New language for consideration - *Stadium MEP systems and critical infrastructure including backup power generation will be reasonably located to guard against flooding. Battery storage capacity will meet or exceed the minimum expected energy requirements of the facility operations during an emergency.*

Item I – New language for consideration - *the Stadium will be designed and built to withstand a Level 5 hurricane.*

Exhibit B.2 – Definitive Elements
Language to be added

Sufficient photovoltaic power to annually generate 100% of the annual power needs of the Stadium and associated facilities.

Sufficient battery storage capacity to fully operate the Stadium as a public emergency shelter for local evacuations.

Stadium Operating Agreement

Article 11 Rights of Access and Use
Section 3 Major Emergency Event

New language for consideration – replace exclusionary language “shelter to essential City employees and their families,” with more inclusive language “*public shelter for displaced Pinellas County residents and/or visitors,*”.

HGP Redevelopment Agreement

Article 6 Community Benefits Agreement
Section 1 Community Benefit Obligations
Subsection 6 Sustainability

Item 2 – New language for consideration – *Restoring and protecting Booker Creek by:*

- *Design a 50-foot riparian buffer, with native Florida vegetation and natural embankments on both banks, to help manage stormwater that drains into Tampa Bay.*
- *Utilizing Low Impact Design and Green Infrastructure*
- *Providing sunlight exposure for as much of the creek as possible*
- *Using fabric encapsulated soil lifts on steep bank slopes*
- *Utilizing vegetative water quality benches to convey base flows and first-flush flows from the drainage basins.*
- *Hydrologically connect floodable wetlands.*
- *Avoid ornamental flora—such as palm trees—in landscaping and open space amenities utilizing verified Florida native plants with vegetation with an emphasis on providing shade cover both for recreational purposes and habitat for native flora.*
- *No concrete channelization and riprap will be used within the Booker Creek watershed.*

Item 3 – New language for consideration – *Follow the St Petersburg Complete Streets Plan to promote active transportation and enhanced air quality.*

Item 4 – This language needs to be improved to meet or exceed an existing standard related to limiting waste while encouraging reuse/recycling over the course of all phases of the HGP redevelopment. This should be a measurable objective.

Item 5 – New language for consideration –

- *All new construction will be LEED Gold as the Target Development Plan and LEED Silver as the Minimum Required Development.*
- *All new construction will be “solar-ready” and have Level 2 EV charger capability.*
- *Multi-unit housing should meet the EV charging expectations laid out by the St. Petersburg City Council in their proposed ordinance developed in 2023.*
- *All construction will comply with the [Sustainability & Resiliency of City Facilities Ordinance No. 359-H](#).*
- *All rental housing leases will include a Total Cost of Rental agreement encompassing all rental and utility costs.*

Schedule 4 Eligible Infrastructure Costs

Streetlights section – Proposed addition of an eighth bullet with new language for consideration—*All lighting comply with best practices identified by the [International DarkSky Association](#) and the [ROLAN Manifesto for lighting professionals](#) for relevant outdoor lighting.*

We appreciate the collective work that the Council, Administration, and the Rays/Hines Development Team has done to improve the initial agreements. However, the agreements must be made more specific related to the items outlined above prior to any final actions taken by City Council regarding approval of the agreements.

Thank you in advance for taking action to address these details. We stand ready to support your endeavors to make the Historic Gas Plant District and Ray/Hines Stadium deal everything it can and must be for the quality of life and economic future of your constituents.

Sincerely,
Sierra Club Florida Suncoast Group Executive Committee

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[Schedule a 1:1 meeting here.](#)

