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VIA EMAIL

St. Petersburg City Council
cynthia.sheppard@stpete.org

Re: Letter of Support / Tampa Bay Rays & Hines Group

St. Petersburg City Council,

As a native of St. Petersburg, it has been inspiring to see how much our wonderful city has developed and become a truly dynamic, “one-of-one”, vibrant place to live, work and play. While there have been so many instrumental people, governmental leaders, and businesses that have played enormous roles in helping our community get to where it is today, I would say that there are a special few that have caused a paradigm shift in our city’s trajectory and success over the last thirty (30) years. At the top of that elite list resides the Tampa Bay Rays and their birth in 1998. Not only did the Rays becoming a Major League Baseball (MLB) franchise help put a spotlight on St. Petersburg and make a seismic impact on our city’s economic development, but, more importantly, the Rays became a part of the fabric of St. Petersburg and a trusted partner in our community. The Rays did not accomplish this by being just successful on the field (which they most certainly have done as the third winningest franchise in all of MLB since 2010), but, rather, by being constant and unwavering supporters and contributors to important community initiatives, civic organizations, charities, schools, and local small businesses for decades. For this, as a life-long resident and business owner of St. Pete, I am forever indebted.

Over the last few decades, the Rays’ leadership has not only learned about the history of St. Petersburg (the good and the bad) but also become a vital part in curating its future. The redevelopment of the Gas Plant District and neighborhood is an extremely important project given our community’s interest in preserving its history. I cannot think of a better local organization that will respect the historical significance and importance of the Gas Plant District. Furthermore, the Rays have always been an organization that performs on and off the field. Meaning, once a



commitment is made, they have always shown to see it through to the end. I am fully confident that the Rays will exceed all expectations in redeveloping the Gas Plant District in a manner that is inclusive and respectful to its legacy. As to the Hines Group, I have researched this organization and from all data points there are very few developers that can handle a project of this magnitude. When reviewing that short list of developers, the Hines Group is consistently on top as best-in-class and I have yet to hear anything negative regarding their work or ability to follow through on a project.

As a resident and business owner in St. Petersburg, I have never been more excited. We stand at the forefront of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and truly transformational project. We need to seize this moment and move forward with the Rays/Hines Group redevelopment. Right now, St. Petersburg has the wind in its sails and is the envy of many other cities that are trying to emulate the momentum we have organically created. This project can galvanize that momentum for many decades to come. Further, all of us can be a part of, and play a role in, making St. Petersburg an absolute success story through this project.

As a partner at Johnson Pope Law Firm; owner of the Mandarin Hide cocktail bar; owner of Trophy Fish restaurant; owner of El Cap restaurant; owner of Perry's Porch restaurant; owner of numerous commercial properties in St. Pete; President of the St. Petersburg Bar Association; Chair of the St. Petersburg Arts Alliance; past-chair and board member of the St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce; board member of the St. Petersburg Economic Development Corporation; past chair of Grow Smarter – St. Petersburg's equitable economic development strategy; board member of Bayfront Health's Philanthropy Council; and member of numerous local organizations, I can safely say that the Rays community involvement has positively impacted each of the aforementioned entities over the years and, when this redevelopment project goes forward, will continue to do so.

I am in full support of the Rays/Hines Group's redevelopment of the Gas Plant District and respectfully ask that the St. Petersburg City Council support it as well.

Sincerely,

Ryan C. Griffin

cc: Mayor Ken Welch, Brian Auld