

February 12, 2024



Mayor Ken Welch and St. Pete City Council,

I am writing in support of the new Rays ballpark initiative. After attending meetings hosted by the City of St. Pete, reviewing, and listening to details regarding plans provided by the Tampa Bay Rays, and hearing from long term residents like Ms. Gwendolyn Reece, I write in support of the project.

First, the Tampa Bay Rays are a pillar of community support. Our organization has locations in both Tampa and St. Pete and while the teams make their way to both sides of the bay, I can tell you there is nothing like having a home team in your backyard. While our other sports partners focus their time on our 14-bedroom Tampa Ronald McDonald House, the Tampa Bay Rays are critical partners to our 66-Rooms in St. Petersburg serving families of hospitalized children.

For several decades, the Rays have provided leadership on our board, funding to support our mission, as well as on-site volunteerism to support families by both staff and players. The Rays are consistent in their commitment, directly funding about 200 overnight families a year in addition to giving their time serving many more families. Some specific outcomes:

- Directly provided and served hundreds of meals to our families. They even kept up with this service during Covid; When they could not come on-site to serve, they sent food.
- Provided financial and in-kind support for capital improvement projects including helping our new house in 2010 and upgrading our East House backyard with turf.
- Given financial support to directly underwrite programs that serve residents of the City of St. Pete, Pinellas County and those traveling to our community to receive the best pediatric care for their child.
- Provided opportunities for families staying at RMHC to attend baseball games throughout the season, and even throw out the first pitch and meet players at the field and at our locations.

Located within walking distance of the stadium, our 3 St. Pete Ronald McDonald Houses are an integral part of the community supporting both local families and those traveling into our city for the best pediatric medical care. Our charity provides access to healthcare for all families by taking the financial burden of food, housing and support services during a pediatric medical crisis. The Tampa Bay Rays are an integral partner to our mission.

Located just south of downtown, we understand how critical the Historic Gas Plant site is to the community and the unfulfilled promises that were made to residents for over 50 years. We support the voice of the residents of St. Pete and the requirements they have for the property moving forward. For our charity, affordable housing for the community and for the workforce is key. As an employer in the downtown community, our workforce either lives on the southside and has been residing there for many decades, or must live well outside the city to find affordable housing. The re-development must bring economic prosperity to those that already live in these areas instead of driving them out or making these areas unaffordable.

Based on actions from the Tampa Bay Rays and their commitment to the local community, we believe they have the opportunity to be a strong community leader and voice to support initiatives that make St. Pete a better place to live for all.

We support the Tampa Bay Rays in a proposal where a ballpark can be well designed to co-exist into the priorities of the plan while driving continued economic revenue from businesses and visitors to our beautiful downtown area.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa S.", with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Lisa Suprenand, Chief Executive Officer, Ronald McDonald House Charities of Tampa Bay
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