



March 20, 2024

St. Petersburg City Council  
PO Box 2842  
St. Petersburg, FL 33731

Dear Esteemed City Council Members,

I hope this letter finds you all well. Thank you for your long hours of dedication and service to our city. Your leadership comes at a key time in a historic moment for St. Petersburg.

As the CEO of SPCA Tampa Bay, Pinellas County's largest and oldest animal welfare shelter, I also wish to thank you for the City of St. Petersburg's decades of sponsorship of our Annual SPCA Tampa Bay Pet Walk event, which we celebrate our 33<sup>rd</sup> year at North Straub Park on April 6<sup>th</sup>.

I am writing with the full support of my community-based board of directors to express our wholehearted support for the Historic Gas Plant District's new ballpark, vibrant community gathering space, and preservation of the legacy of St. Petersburg's African-American history. This decision has been long-awaited and is significant for our entire community.

Over the years, SPCA Tampa Bay has been fortunate to receive unwavering support from the Tampa Bay Rays and the Rays Baseball Foundation. I fondly recall offering guidance on the Tampa Bay Ray's first-ever Dog Day at the Rays event. Our relationship with the Rays has grown even stronger over the last two years as we humbly received a Rays Community Fund Grant, participated in Rays Fan Fest, and hosted a SPCA Tampa Bay Night with the Rays. Additionally, the Rays Employee Community Outreach Team spent an entire day at the shelter last year building a much-needed fenced-in scent garden for dogs in our care.

This season, we are continuing our involvement with the Rays. We are working together on a new mental health outreach initiative at the ballpark this spring to highlight the beneficial relationship that pet adoption brings to both humans and animals. The Rays' contributions and efforts have played a crucial role in our ability to provide care and shelter for countless animals in need. The partnership between SPCA Tampa Bay and the Tampa Bay Rays has been a shining example of community collaboration and support.

The prospect of a new baseball stadium and the associated redevelopment signifies progress and growth for St. Petersburg and reaffirms the baseball team's commitment to our region. It is a

testament to the dedication and hard work that has been put in over the decades to reach this point.

I believe the Historic Gas Plant District and new baseball stadium will provide our residents entertainment, housing, office space, museums, and pride and serve as a beacon of hope for local organizations like SPCA Tampa Bay. Let's continue our tradition of being a dog-friendly city, too!

As we stand on the cusp of this historic decision, I urge you to consider the impact that signing the contract for the new baseball stadium and redevelopment will have on our region, its residents, and the organizations that rely on the support of the baseball team. This moment is a culmination of years of partnership, dedication, and progress, and I believe it has the potential to shape a brighter future for all involved.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to the positive impact the Historic Gas Plant District will bring to our community and the continued support of the Rays and all the animals they support at our SPCA Tampa Bay shelter.

Sincerely,



Martha Boden

CEO, SPCA Tampa Bay