

City of St. Petersburg  
City Council  
PO Box 2842  
St. Petersburg, FL 33731  
C/O Cindy Sheppard

*Delivered electronically on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024.*

Dear Council Members,

As President of St. Anthony's Hospital, an anchor in the heart of St. Petersburg since 1931, I write to you today in support of the Historic Gas Plant development. I believe that the process that culminated in the selection of the Hines and Tampa Bay Rays proposal was meticulous, with an eye towards our city's long-term success, but an equal deference to the historical inequities in previous developments in the Gas Plant District.

As a member of the St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce, I am elated for the opportunity this project represents for the economic growth in our community. That includes 750 additional hotel rooms, millions of square feet for office and retail space, and 50,000 square feet of space earmarked specifically for non-profits. St. Anthony's Hospital employs over 2,100 individuals, and BayCare Health System has many urgent care, primary care, and specialty care locations throughout St. Petersburg. This development will attract further talent and make St. Petersburg an even more exciting city to call home. Additionally, it will provide 4,800 residential units (leased at market rate) and a further 1,200 units that will support workforce and affordable housing that are desperately needed. Our 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment (tailored specifically to Pinellas County and St. Anthony's Hospital) highlights the direct correlation between stable housing, and health outcomes. Right now, 54.1% of households in Pinellas County spend greater than 30% of their income on rent, 5% higher than the national average. This links directly to increased stress, mental health problems, and a heightened risk of disease.<sup>1</sup> As our community continues to grow, it is imperative that we provide adequate quality housing options so that we are meeting demand and therefore limiting cost.

As a world-renowned developer, Hines has proven successful in developments of this size and scale time and again. This is evidenced in the attention to inconspicuous details that are significant to the health and well-being of a city. There is a focus on designing the ballpark itself as an emergency services hub, a location that can provide a variety of public services in the event of an emergency, or otherwise. This includes food distribution, emergency power vehicle staging, and more. You might recall the current stadium was even utilized as a site to administer COVID-19 tests. Proactively planning for these operations will only improve the seamless nature of these services when they are needed.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/housing-and-homes/reduce-proportion-families-spend-more-30-percent-income-housing-sdoh-04>

This proposal will serve as a catalyst for the Historic Gas Plant District, and beyond. It will attract ever-expanding opportunities for culture, sports, arts, and entertainment into St. Petersburg. The front-end commitment from the partnership to provide \$50 million towards equity efforts in our city is significant, and it speaks to the dedication to lifting everyone in our community up. Of this funding, there is specific investment in the talent pipeline of our community, affordable housing support, improvements to infrastructure in South St. Pete, and \$10 million to the Woodson African American Museum. I am thankful for the City Administration, and Mayor Welch's continued emphasis on making St. Pete a city for everyone.

I look forward to your approval of this proposal based on the promise it brings our City in jobs, housing, equity, and maintaining St. Petersburg as a world-class destination for all.

Sincerely,



Scott S. Smith  
President, St. Anthony's Hospital