



# UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

Office of the President

February 21, 2024

To the honorable members of the St. Petersburg City Council,

The Hines Historic Gas Plant Partnership's project will be transformational for the city of St. Petersburg and the Tampa Bay region, and the University of South Florida stands firmly in support of this forward-thinking initiative. We are excited about the vast benefits our community will experience from this redevelopment and look forward to the opportunity to play a role in the revitalization of this historic area.

As the city of St. Petersburg's and the Tampa Bay region's public research university, we are committed to providing access to world-class educational programming, partnering with local business and industry to provide lifelong learning opportunities, conducting cutting-edge research, providing innovative healthcare solutions for our residents, and spearheading economic development opportunities that uplift our entire region. We believe the Hines Historic Gas Plant Partnership's project will provide exciting new opportunities for collaboration that will advance our mission, benefiting residents, visitors, and our entire community.

As a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities (AAU), we are also uniquely positioned to conduct research that improves public health, seeks to address national challenges, and contributes significantly to our economic strength, while educating and training tomorrow's visionary leaders and innovators. In fact, 64% of federal research funding is awarded to AAU institutions, providing support for innovation, discovery, and research.

There are ongoing discussions between the Hines Historic Gas Plant Partnership and USF about the university having a physical presence on the development site. This would be a tremendous benefit for USF's St. Petersburg campus, which is less than a mile from the site. There is no shortage of ideas for how USF could activate on this site. Ideas presented so far include housing for graduate students, faculty and staff; much-needed high-fidelity nursing labs; a center for urban ecology; and a center focused on research and workforce development related to the creative economy.

We are encouraged by the commitment to affordable housing included in the Hines Historic Gas Plant Partnership's plan. Among other things, affordable and convenient housing is essential for attracting and retaining top quality faculty and staff. We also applaud the partnership's emphasis on developing and retaining young talent by committing \$3.75 million for internships and mentorship/apprentice programs that will lead to job placement during the construction phase, as well as ongoing employment opportunities throughout the operation of the site.

We know this partnership will appropriately honor the legacy of the Historic Gas Plant site through the celebration of arts, history and community connections, including the creation of a new home for the Carter G. Woodson African American Museum.

In summary, we enthusiastically support moving forward with the Hines Historic Gas Plant Partnership's project. This unprecedented investment in our community will pay dividends for generations to come and we stand ready to do everything possible to help ensure its success.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rhea F. Law". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Rhea F. Law  
President  
University of South Florida

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christian E. Hardigree". The signature is more complex and stylized than the one above, with many loops and flourishes.

Christian E. Hardigree  
Regional Chancellor  
USF St. Petersburg