



**SPUR**

San Francisco | San Jose | Oakland

July 12, 2021

Oakland City Council  
Oakland City Hall  
1 Frank Ogawa Plaza  
Oakland, CA 94612

**Re: July 20, 2021 City Council Vote on the Proposed Oakland Waterfront Ballpark at Howard Terminal Development Term Sheet**

Dear Councilmembers,

SPUR believes that the proposed Oakland Waterfront Ballpark at Howard Terminal (“The Project”) has the potential to be a physically, economically and regionally significant project for Oakland. Overall, we are supportive of the proposed project; but have previously suggested that elements of the project as described in the Draft EIR be reconsidered, particularly with regards to transportation, affordable housing and environmental health. You can find our complete comments on the project proposal in our [Draft EIR response](#).

As the Council is well aware, the complexity of The Project’s location requires that the City of Oakland be judicious with regard to structuring an agreement that balances the economic, community, transportation and urban design impacts of The Project. As the City Council continues efforts to review and vote on the development Term Sheet on July 20th, we offer the following considerations:

**PROJECT FINANCING**

SPUR commends the City team, under the direction of Assistant City Administrator Betsy Lake and Project Manager Molly Mayburn, for their clear presentation on the Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD) structure for The Project; given during the July 7th special session of the Community & Economic Development Committee. However, the financing plan to address the necessary offsite infrastructure, particularly transportation improvements, and the outcomes of the City’s year-long community benefits process is unclear. As such, we believe:

1. **The financing of the necessary offsite infrastructure improvements, as they are described in The Project’s Draft EIR, must be clarified.** The City was clear in their July 7th presentation that the proposed EIFD would only cover the 55 acres of the Howard Terminal project site. It is critical to The Project that traffic, bike and pedestrian infrastructure be implemented to ensure optimal transportation outcomes and project success. The City Council and other stakeholders must understand how offsite infrastructure will be funded before the project is approved.
2. **Outcomes and commitments from the year-long community benefits process led by the City and the Oakland A’s in partnership with dozens of community**

**organizations, and how benefits will be financed, must be clarified.** The proposed Howard Terminal EIFD restricts uses of funds from the district and the Oakland A's have seemingly stated that they do not intend to privately finance any community benefits beyond the development and what is covered through the onsite EIFD. This leaves many requested benefits on the table, unfinanced. The community benefits process risks being disingenuous, at the least, without a real and transparent plan for finalizing and financing benefits.

3. **The City's contributions to the project development should not impact the General Fund (GF).** The proposed Howard Terminal EIFD will provide protections to the GF and taxpayers. However, as stated above, we must understand how necessary offsite infrastructure improvements will be funded.
4. **The Coliseum site should not be leveraged to finance the Oakland Waterfront Ballpark.** Future development at the Coliseum must prioritize opportunities for and the needs of East Oakland residents, especially economic advancement and affordable housing for existing residents. Currently, the two projects are not connected and are discussed under separate development agreements with the City. We must ensure these remain unlinked to ensure responsive outcomes for the impacted East Oakland and West Oakland communities, respectively.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

The Oakland Waterfront Ballpark Project can be a catalyst for long-desired transportation and circulation investments both locally and regionally, connecting Downtown to the Oakland waterfront, securing regional rail infrastructure in Oakland, and improving freight and passenger rail safety through Jack London Square. Howard Terminal is at the nexus of multiple competing uses including port operations, freight rail and passenger rail, as well as industrial, commercial and residential housing. The site is also at the center of contemplated large-scale infrastructure investments, including a possible second Transbay crossing and Oakland transit hub. Public transit improvements and freight rail safety must be primary priorities for this project to move forward. Given this, we believe:

5. **Issues of rail safety must be adequately addressed through the project and will require offsite infrastructure improvements to ensure this.** Clarity on how the offsite improvements will be financed and assurance that the project will have the partnership of Union Pacific Railroad, BART and other regional transportation entities will be integral to its success (see items 1 and 7 for further discussion).
6. **A complete, protected bike network from the West Oakland, 19th Street and Lake Merritt BART stations is required for project success, reducing traffic and meeting sustainability goals for the City.** The Project and associated financing must adequately address this need.
7. **This project must design and plan for regional transportation transformation.** It is imperative that regional agencies such as Union Pacific Railroad and BART partner with the City and the A's to develop transportation improvements that prioritize pedestrian

safety and sustainability. A multi-sectoral approach coupled with regional collective action will be necessary to realize the potential of this next generation of transportation investments for the City of Oakland. See our forthcoming report, *10 Ideas for Regional Transportation Investment in Oakland*, for more detail on catalyzing infrastructure repairs and centering Oakland in our regional transportation network.

## HOUSING

The current project description and terms provide vague details on affordable housing goals. As many advocates have stated, SPUR believes:

8. **The Project must develop housing across the affordability range, with affordable housing allocations clearer and more transparent.** We support a high number of overall units, including affordable units. We would hope the project would include the maximum amount of feasible affordable units and we'd like to support the City in determining what that number would be.

## ECONOMIC AND RACIAL JUSTICE

9. **Port operations should not be compromised and we should assume growth as we execute development along the Port.** The Port is a critical economic hub for the East Bay and operations are projected to grow. Final Project agreements should be made in collaboration with the Port and its business stakeholders.
10. **The Project must more intentionally consider the needs of Chinatown.** Adjacent to West Oakland and in close proximity to Chinatown -- communities vulnerable to residential and economic displacement -- the chosen location emphasizes the need for equity-centered, inclusive and exhaustive engagement, in addition to comprehensive community benefits. If done well, The Project can be a mechanism for the preservation of Black, Asian and other small businesses, and for the economic advancement of communities of color.

The Project term sheet is an opportunity to set the standard for the City's expectations of this development, while ensuring we keep the A's in Oakland by advancing this catalytic project. We believe there is a path forward for this project and hope for a judicious and fruitful public dialogue on the matter on July 20th.

Sincerely,



Ronak Davé Okoye  
SPUR Oakland Director

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*SPUR is an urban policy nonprofit with offices in San Francisco, San José and Oakland and thousands of members across the region. Through research, education and advocacy, SPUR works to create an equitable, sustainable and prosperous region. We bring people together from across the political spectrum to develop solutions to the big problems cities face. SPUR is recognized as a leading civic planning organization and respected for our independent and holistic approach to urban issues.*