

Stadiums, Sidewalks and Downtown vs. The Rest of the City

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PUTTING NEIGHBORHOODS FIRST – In various publications this week, an LA Neighbors United advertisement makes the case that the city should be assured a minimum annual revenue guarantee from a downtown stadium — perhaps as part of a revenue-sharing plan — with some of the [money](#) dedicated to neighborhood improvements citywide. If you haven't seen the ad yet, it's posted on www.LAneighbors.org.

The advertising has generated a fair amount of public discussion about the possibility the city will leave a serious chunk of change on the table in stadium negotiations. That's our worry, too, but we're hopeful policymakers ultimately will get it right. We want the stadium operator to do well, and by extension the city, especially since there are other potential uses for the site that would generate much more activity on many more days.

The ads brought me a full mailbag, including an errant query from a reporter asking if I was trying to sabotage the downtown stadium deal because of personal interest in real estate speculation in the area. That's a good one (Boy, the City Hall spinners are good!) ... and more than a little inconsistent with my defense against the dark artists who would subvert the city's zoning code to fuel unbridled speculation.

More meaningful communication came from people living downtown. One person called me a thief (a substitute for the exact words, since this is a family blog) for wanting to see funds generated downtown shared with the rest of the city. First, no one is suggesting that direct impacts of a stadium not be mitigated. Second, with all due respect to my friends downtown (and considering I personally am an advocate for a strong urban core), if every cent of revenue stayed where it's generated in our city, we'd have no potholes on the Westside or in the Valley, and more potholes downtown.

Downtown has done well at the public trough, thanks to the generosity of taxpayers in Los Angeles, the state of California and the United States of America, who have poured billions of dollars in public funds and tax breaks into the area over generations.

A more compelling story came indirectly from another downtowner who keeps hoping her neighborhood will become more livable. Her [local](#) streets are regularly marked by human excrement, she said, literally stinking on the street. She said she hopes the continued redevelopment of downtown will bring positive change to her corner of Los Angeles.

She may be more of a dreamer than I am. A city that tolerates use of its streets as toilets isn't likely to change its ways because a new development project throws off a few bucks.

But money can make a difference if we use it wisely by investing in neighborhoods across the city. As became abundantly clear from the latest Census, people are leaving Los Angeles, and we know why. It's not because we don't have a professional football stadium. It's because we've stopped taking care of the basics, including streets and sidewalks. Can we support a stadium and our neighborhoods? Absolutely. But a stadium at the expense of sidewalks? That's no recipe for a livable city.