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// call the onload handler } }; /*@end @*/
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The Chargers On Why Public Funding is Necessary

Posted by: Jason Riggs in [Taxpayers](#) , [stadium](#) , [Public funding](#) , [Downtown site](#) , [Chargers](#)
on
Dec 16, 2009

The Chargers recently released an Op-Ed which was published in the San Diego Union Tribune on Saturday December 12.

They've addressed some of the key issues and potential concerns surrounding the use of public funds for this stadium.

The San Diego Stadium Coalition endorses this approach and hopes that level heads will prevail as this discussion is explored in an open public forum in the coming months.

Here is the article reprinted in it's entirety:

The Union Tribune's December 11th story on the need for some form of public funding for a new downtown NFL stadium has started a vigorous debate. And that's a good thing, because it's important for people to understand that a stadium downtown would require a funding plan very different from the plan they've been hearing about for the past several years.

As the public discussion gets started, though, one thing is for sure: No matter which way you come down on the question of public funding, this is not a debate between one side that is against taxpayer spending and one side that is for it.

The people who say they are in favor of the status quo – those who say that the Chargers should simply stay in Qualcomm Stadium and play out their lease through the year 2020 – are in fact advocating the spending of more than \$300 million in taxpayer money between now and

then just to keep the aging stadium operating. In short, by advocating inaction, proponents of the status quo are also advocating the expenditure of huge amounts of taxpayer money from now until 2020.

Those in favor of the downtown site are arguing that there is a better use for the Qualcomm site (that could potentially both generate new revenue and community amenities such as a park), as well as a better use for the \$15 million a year that the city now spends on the existing stadium.

As the debate goes on, voters will of course make up their own minds. But it would be a mistake for anyone to cast this as a debate between taxpayer money vs. no taxpayer money. Taxpayer money is going to be spent no matter what. It is being spent right now, each and every year. The real question is how it can best be spent.

So why does the downtown site require a different kind of funding plan. The answer is really just one word: Size – as in the small size of the proposed downtown site. The Chargers' previous attempts over the last seven years to privately finance a stadium all involved very large sites that could accommodate both a stadium and a related development project – the profits of which would help pay for the costs of the stadium. These large sites included, among others, the existing Qualcomm site (166 acres), the Chula Vista bay front site (130 acres), and the Oceanside drive-in and golf course sites (a combined 165 acres).

The downtown San Diego site now being considered is just over 10 acres – making it the smallest stadium site in the NFL. As a result, the site will accommodate, at most, the stadium, without any opportunity for the related development to help pay for the stadium.

For that reason, the successful development of a stadium at the downtown site will require sources of funding other than what might come from a related development, in addition to a \$250 - \$300 million investment by the Chargers and the NFL.

It's too soon to say what other funding sources may be available. That's the subject of an ongoing city-sponsored study by a stadium finance expert.

Nonetheless, we believe it's important for everyone to understand that the downtown site will certainly require a different sort of funding plan than the stadium funding concept that they are already familiarly with. In short, the downtown site might require some sort of taxpayer subsidy.

Such a subsidy would only be possible if voters agree that an investment downtown will result in significant returns for taxpayers elsewhere. For example:

- o Would a taxpayer investment downtown result in the city of San Diego saving the \$300 million or more that taxpayers will otherwise pay through 2020 to maintain the Qualcomm site?

- o Would an investment downtown allow the city of San Diego to sell, lease or otherwise generate hundreds of millions of dollars of revenue from the 166-acre Qualcomm site?

o Would a taxpayer investment downtown allow the city of San Diego to make better use of the 100 or so acres it owns in and around the Sports Arena site?

These are all open questions, and ultimately voters will decide whether a public investment in this kind of project makes sense. For our part, the Chargers believe that, at this early stage of the process, the one thing that does make sense is to continue to explore these ideas to see where they might lead.

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