

1 COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

2

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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City Hall, Room 400
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, November 20, 2024
10:00 a.m.

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PRESENT:

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10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILWOMAN NINA AHMAD
11 COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DRISCOLL
12 COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER
COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE RICHARDSON
13 COUNCILMAN JIM HARRITY
COUNCILMAN CURTIS J. JONES, JR.
14 COUNCILWOMAN RUE LANDAU
COUNCILWOMAN QUETCY M. LOZADA
15 COUNCILMAN BRIAN J. O'NEILL
COUNCILMAN NICOLAS O'ROURKE
16 COUNCILMAN ANTHONY PHILLIPS
COUNCILMAN ISAIAH THOMAS
17 COUNCILMAN JEFFREY YOUNG, JR.

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20 JOHN D. CHRISTMAS, CHIEF CLERK

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

3 JOHNSON:

4 Good morning, everyone.

5 This is the public

6 hearing of the Committee of the

7 Whole regarding Bill's Number

8 240966, 240967, 240968, 240969,

9 240970, 240971, 240972, and 240973.

10 Before calling the roll,

11 I'd like to announce that we have

12 translation services available for

13 anyone present at today's hearing.

14 If needed, please go to the table to

15 my left. Services are offered in

16 Mandarin and Cantonese.

17 Mr. Christmas, will you

18 please call a roll.

19 CHIEF CLERK: Councilman

20 Squilla.

21 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:

22 (Nonverbal response)

23 CHIEF CLERK: Council

24 Jamie Gauthier.

1 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
2 Present.
3 CHIEF CLERK: Councilman
4 Jones.
5 Councilmember JONES:
6 Present.
7 CHIEF CLERK: Councilman
8 Young.
9 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:
10 (Nonverbal response)
11 CHIEF CLERK: Councilman
12 Driscoll.
13 COUNCILMEMBER DRISCOLL:
14 (Nonverbal response)
15 CHIEF CLERK: Council
16 Lady Lozada.
17 COUNCILMEMBER Lozada:
18 (Nonverbal response)
19 CHIEF CLERK: Council
20 Lady Bass.
21 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:
22 Present.
23 CHIEF CLERK: Councilman
24 Phillips.

1 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

2 Present.

3 CHIEF CLERK: Councilman

4 O'Neill.

5 COUNCILMEMBER O'NEILL:

6 (Nonverbal response)

7 CHIEF CLERK: Council

8 Lady Gilmore Richardson.

9 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON:

10 Present.

11 CHIEF CLERK: Councilman

12 Thomas.

13 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:

14 (Nonverbal response)

15 CHIEF CLERK: Councilman

16 Harrity.

17 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

18 Present.

19 CHIEF CLERK: Council

20 Lady Ahmad.

21 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD:

22 Present.

23 CHIEF CLERK: Council

24 Lady Landau.

1 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

2 (Nonverbal response)

3 CHIEF CLERK: Council

4 Lady Brooks.

5 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS:

6 (Nonverbal response)

7 CHIEF CLERK: Councilman

8 O'Rourke.

9 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

10 Present.

11 CHIEF CLERK: Council

12 President Johnson.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON: Present. Thank you. A

15 quorum of this committee is present.

16 And this hearing is now called to

17 order. Mr. Chris, will you please

18 read the title of the bills?

19 CHIEF CLERK: Bill Number

20 240966; to grant the necessary

21 authorizations for the city to help

22 facilitate development,

23 construction, and operation of a new

24 arena for the Philadelphia 76ers

1 professional basketball team and for
2 other uses, including authorizing
3 the commission of public property
4 and such other city officials as may
5 be appropriate on behalf of the city
6 to enter into the following
7 agreements and take the following
8 actions:

9 Acquire fee simple title
10 to all the portions of 1001 to 1025
11 Filbert Street, 1001 to 1019 Market
12 Street, and 1025 Market Street,
13 together, the Market and Filbert
14 Street properties.

15 Acquire fee simple title
16 to other parcels of land, aerial
17 areas and subsurface areas in the
18 vicinity of the Market and Filbert
19 Street properties, including,
20 without limitation, those areas
21 reverting to the city or other
22 parties in connection with the
23 striking of certain aerial portions
24 of 10th Street between Market Street

1 and Filbert Street, and in certain
2 other nearby parcels and areas enter
3 into a ground lease agreement with
4 the Philadelphia Authority for
5 Industrial Development under which
6 the city would lease to pay all or a
7 portion of the Market Street and
8 Filbert Street properties and the
9 additional properties, if any, and
10 other parcels and subsurface areas
11 the city now owns in the vicinity of
12 those properties, all of which
13 collectively would constitute the
14 arena site.

15 Join in or consent to a
16 sublease and development agreement
17 between pay and other CBL Arena, LLC
18 and entity affiliated with the
19 Philadelphia 76ers LP or another
20 entity affiliated with the 76ers
21 under which Arena Co or other 76 or
22 related entity would sublease the
23 area -- the arena site and cause an
24 arena to be constructed on it,

1 including a multi-purpose sports
2 entertainment facility and ancillary
3 accessory and related amenities,
4 improvements and infrastructure and
5 agree to other related conditions.

6 Upon the expiration or
7 termination of the sublease or other
8 circumstances set forth in the
9 sublease, convey fee simple title to
10 the arena to pay for disposition to
11 ArenaCo. grant, accept, amend,
12 relocate and extinguish easements
13 agreements, conditions, covenants
14 and restrictions encumbering or
15 benefiting the arena site in any
16 city on property adjacent to the
17 arena site for the benefit of the
18 arena site.

19 To facilitate
20 construction and operation of the
21 arena, enter into a direct operating
22 covenant agreement among the 76ers
23 paid in the city, under which the
24 76ers agree to play substantially

1 all of their regular season and
2 playoff games -- playoff home games
3 in the arena and take all actions
4 necessary and appropriate to
5 accomplish the intent and purpose of
6 this ordinance, all under certain
7 terms and conditions.

8 And Bill Number 240967,
9 authorizing and approving the
10 execution and delivery of a service
11 agreement between the City of
12 Philadelphia and the Philadelphia
13 Authority for Industrial Development
14 relating to the provision by the
15 Philadelphia Authority for
16 Industrial Development of certain
17 project related services to promote
18 among other things, the growth and
19 expansion of business, commerce, and
20 tourism within the city of
21 Philadelphia in connection with the
22 development of a multi-purpose
23 sports and entertainment facility,
24 including an arena to accommodate

1 National Basketball Association
2 games and family entertainment,
3 community retail and other uses.

4 Authorizing and approving
5 the obligation of the city of
6 Philadelphia to pay in full when
7 due, the service fee and other
8 amounts payable under the service
9 agreement and covenanting to make
10 necessary appropriations for such
11 purpose and authorizing city
12 officials to take necessary or
13 appropriate actions to accomplish
14 the intent and purpose of the
15 ordinance, all under certain terms
16 and conditions.

17 And Bill Number 240968,
18 authorizing the revision of lines
19 and grades on a portion of City Plan
20 No. 307, by striking from the city
21 plan and vacating Filbert Street
22 from 10th Street to 11th Street
23 under certain terms and conditions.

24 And Bill Number 240969,

1 authorizing the revision of lines
2 and grades on a portion of City Plan
3 No. 307 by striking from the city
4 plan and vacating certain aerial
5 portions of 10th Street between
6 Market Street and Filbert Street
7 under certain terms and conditions.

8 And Bill Number 240970,
9 authorizing CBL Arena, LLC, and its
10 assessors and interest to construct,
11 own, and maintain various right of
12 way encroachments in the vicinity of
13 1019 Market Street, 1025 Market
14 Street, 1001 to 25 Filbert Street,
15 Philadelphia, PA, under certain
16 terms and conditions.

17 And Bill Number 240971,
18 amending Title 14 of the
19 Philadelphia Code, entitled Zoning
20 and Planning, by amending certain
21 definitions relating to signs,
22 creating an arena area within the
23 Center City Overlay district and
24 making related changes including a

1 master plan requirement and changes
2 to assessory sign controls, all in
3 connection with zoning rules for
4 proposed arena in Center City, and
5 approving a master plan for the
6 arena area, all under certain terms
7 and conditions.

8 And Bill Number 240972,
9 amending Title 14 of the
10 Philadelphia Code, entitled Zoning
11 and Planning, by revising certain
12 provisions of Section 14906 entitled
13 Market Street E-Sign Regulation, all
14 under certain terms and conditions.

15 And Bill Number 940973,
16 approving the amendment of a
17 neighborhood improvement district in
18 the area, generally bounded by and
19 including 11th Street to the west,
20 Filbert Street to the north, 8th
21 Street to the east, and Market
22 Street to the south, with the
23 exception of certain condominium
24 units at 801 Market Street.

1 Condominium not included
2 in the district known as the Gallery
3 Neighborhood Improvement District to
4 remove certain portions of such
5 property, generally bounded by
6 Filbert Street on the North, 10th
7 Street on the East, 11th Street on
8 the West, and Market Street on the
9 south from such district in
10 accordance with the provisions of
11 the Community and Economic
12 Improvement Act all under certain
13 terms and conditions.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: Thank you very much. We
16 want to thank everyone for coming to
17 participate in public comment today
18 as we discuss, consider, and debate
19 the proposal that's before us.
20 Today we welcome all feedback, pro
21 and con, regarding this proposal.
22 We just ask for a level of respect
23 regarding public comments.

24 Also working with us

1 today is to my left, the Department
2 of Civil Affairs, our Sheriff's
3 Department, and Philadelphia
4 finances, Philadelphia Police
5 Department, as we operate and move
6 through this process. The first
7 gentleman we're going to ask to call
8 up, Mr. John Christmas, please.

9 CHIEF CLERK: Mr. Sam
10 Staten.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

12 JOHNSON: In the meanwhile, how's
13 everybody doing today? All right?
14 That's good. Good morning. How you
15 doing today?

16 MR. STATEN: Good morning
17 --

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

19 JOHNSON: Good morning.

20 MR. STATEN: -- Council
21 President. Good morning Council
22 members. My name is Sam Staten Jr.
23 The business manager of Laborers'
24 Local 332, also International Vice

1 President for the Laborers'
2 International Union of North America
3 and Canada. I'm here today to
4 testify about how important it's
5 that we have this arena downtown.

6 As you know, Local 332 is
7 a construction union. That our
8 membership depends on work. We all
9 know about construction, that it's
10 seasonal. It's not year-round. So
11 anytime we get an opportunity to get
12 our members to work, we are charged
13 to do that. Our local unions are
14 unique because we invite -- probably
15 is the only local that employs every
16 nationality. We are proud of that.
17 Our local was founded in the 1920s
18 by African Americans. It was
19 chartered by International 1932.
20 Since that time, it's only been
21 eight business managers. I'm the
22 eighth business manager.

23 We are proud of our
24 heritage and I understand Chinatown

1 wanted to be proud of their
2 heritage. When it comes down to
3 viable and work, we depend on
4 contractors that we have signed
5 signatory to give us decent benefits
6 and wages. We fight for that. I
7 was educated yesterday.

8 I used to go to Chinatown
9 quite a bit to eat. And when I was
10 sitting in Chinatown eating, I would
11 notice that I didn't see many
12 people. I saw a lot of people who
13 looked like me eating, but I didn't
14 see a lot of people working. That
15 kind of disturbed me to the bit that
16 I stopped going to Chinatown.

17 Yesterday, when a
18 question was asked about -- one of
19 the City Council members about the
20 employment, and the gentleman said,
21 we had 300 businesses in Chinatown,
22 but he only employed three African
23 Americans.

24 That was -- that was

1 disturbing for me. And to know that
2 City Council and our mayor is trying
3 to bring back Center City, it's a
4 great thing because like any place
5 else, you need an anchor. You need
6 an anchor. A mall don't survive
7 without anchor stores in a mall. We
8 talk about downtown.

9 I remember the days,
10 holidays where every store had
11 lights up. You could walk 20 blocks
12 and see all shopping in stores.
13 Things were lively. People were
14 enjoying themselves. That hasn't
15 happened here in Philadelphia in
16 over 20 years. Where you go
17 downtown and Christmas time is dead.
18 Vacant buildings is all you see.

19 This arena will bring
20 back businesses, especially minority
21 businesses. You talk about minority
22 business having a chasing a dream.
23 You talk about minority contractors
24 chasing a dream, be a part of this

1 stadium. It is so, so important.
2 When it's all said and done,
3 Chinatown will go back to be in
4 Chinatown, but it don't change the
5 makeup of downtown if it's not done.
6 It's still going to have board up
7 stores, people waiting for an
8 opportunity.

9 We must make this arena
10 happen. So many people depend on
11 this arena happening. I recall in
12 my younger days, the downtown that I
13 remember, we had so many options;
14 movies, shopping, they don't exist
15 now. Why? Because we have to do
16 better. We have to do better. This
17 is not about Chinatown; this is
18 about the city of Philadelphia.

19 We hear our mayor talk
20 about one united city. We must make
21 this -- the stadium happen. So I'm
22 calling on City Council to make sure
23 that it happened not just for my
24 membership. But you talk about the

1 jobs that it's going to create in
2 the retail, the new business owners
3 that they are going to create with
4 these properties that now boarded up
5 and vacant. So again, I stress upon
6 the Council to pass the bills.
7 Thank you.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON:

10 Sam, before I turn over
11 to my members, we just want to
12 publicly, just thank you and
13 acknowledge you for the work that
14 you do, representing Laborers'
15 District Council in 332, but most
16 importantly carrying on the life and
17 legacy of Sam Staten, Sr.

18 And so you are always in
19 the community. You are always
20 talking about economic development,
21 and most importantly, making sure
22 we're putting our best foot forward
23 to advocate for those most in need
24 when it comes to addressing issue of

1 poverty here in the great city of
2 Philadelphia. The chair recognizes
3 the Councilman Jim Harrity.

4 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

5 Thank you, Council
6 President. Thank you, Mr. Staten,
7 for coming in today and taking your
8 time. I know you're a busy guy.
9 What can you tell me about what this
10 job will do for members of all the
11 unions? This is going to be a five-
12 year job, right? Those of us who've
13 worked in the industry know that
14 once you get a little bit of gray
15 hair on your head or in your beard,
16 it gets harder and harder to become
17 a steady person.

18 This job will not -- this
19 will not only create jobs, but this
20 will also allow our members to
21 retire off of this job, correct?

22 MR. STATEN: Yes. I
23 mean, this is huge because, you
24 know, we are -- we are a great

1 proponent of apprenticeship. So
2 it's not just our members, we're
3 talking about the future. Like,
4 every union's not going to survive
5 unless you have people coming behind
6 you to maintain it.

7 We've been around since
8 the 1920s. We didn't stay around
9 because we were there, there was
10 members to keep the work going and
11 keep the work going. So when you
12 talk about construct, and like I
13 said, again, it's seasonal. But
14 you're also changing lives in every
15 kind of area. Whether it's be our
16 membership, be apprentices, people
17 returning citizens from prison.
18 It's so many opportunities here that
19 we talking about.

20 Like I say, Chinatown's
21 going to go back to Chinatown, be in
22 Chinatown when it's all said and
23 done. But the city still got to
24 find jobs for people to be able to

1 pay taxes and people to still
2 support their families. And this is
3 what this kind of work does for us
4 in construction.

5 The other piece of that
6 is this is why you have union
7 contractors because there's
8 definitely a difference between
9 union and non-union in a building.
10 When you build union, you're safe.
11 You know, you walk through a
12 building and it don't cave in.

13 We had this issue some
14 years ago where people got killed at
15 20th and Market because we had a
16 non-union contract trying to do some
17 work that he wasn't qualified to do
18 and people died. This is why you
19 depend on union because we are first
20 class. Yesterday, if you heard
21 Mr. Boyer say, we spend \$48 million
22 a year in training. That's huge
23 because when you put people life on
24 a line, you want to have the best.

1 We have a training school
2 right on Broad Street that we built,
3 brand new four -- three or four
4 years ago. Because we want to train
5 the best. We want to be prepared
6 for when contractors come to do this
7 work. We send the best that we have
8 because we know how dangerous their
9 work is. And plus we want people to
10 have careers.

11 I was just at our
12 training school last night, we had
13 35 new people that I spoke to. Some
14 of them came from prison. It
15 doesn't matter for us. We don't
16 look at people and where they come
17 from. We look at what their future
18 and where they want to go. That's
19 what matters.

20 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

21 Thank you, Council
22 President.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON:

1 Thank you very much for
2 your testimony.

3 MR. STATEN: Yeah. Thank
4 you.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
6 JOHNSON:

7 So we're in a public
8 comment phase and we're going to
9 call up individuals who signed up
10 for public comment.

11 CHIEF CLERK: Would
12 Mr. Paul Scott Heaton, Ms. Lynn
13 Major, Mr. Dave Kyu, Sunhee Volz and
14 Jeena Chang, please come forward.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
16 JOHNSON: Say the names again.

17 CHIEF CLERK: Ms. Lynn.
18 Oh, Mr. Paul Heaton. Ms. Lynn
19 Major, Dave Kyu, and Sunhee Volz.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
21 JOHNSON: How you doing, ma'am?
22 Just state your name.

23 MS. OLSEN: Darlene
24 Olsen.

1 CHIEF CLERK: I didn't
2 call her. I didn't even call her.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: We didn't call you yet.
5 Just one second, ma'am.

6 CHIEF CLERK: Again, I
7 called Paul Scott Heaton. Lynn
8 Major, Dave Kyu, and Sunhee Volz.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON: Darlene, go ahead. State
11 your name and begin with your
12 testimony.

13 MS. OLSEN: Okay. Those
14 of us who are 65 and up and came
15 here for a good retirement life have
16 not been considered as stakeholder
17 group. But we must not be ignored.
18 We make up over 30% of residents in
19 the tourist part of the city, both
20 east and west of Broad. We spend
21 our retirement money here in the
22 city. We came here because of
23 access to good medical care,
24 theaters, dining. We came here to

1 stay here feeling confident that
2 when the time came we could get
3 around safely with canes, walkers,
4 and wheelchairs.

5 I have made friends
6 through social groups, like Friends
7 of the City and the Transition
8 Network, and that's how I can speak
9 for others my age. For over a year
10 now, I have been organizing lunches
11 in restaurants within the Chinatown
12 neighborhood. We've enjoyed over
13 two dozen restaurants so far and
14 there is always a wait list to my
15 lunch events.

16 I asked them what brought
17 you to Philly? Like me, many of us
18 do not drive and are reliant on
19 walking and public transportation.
20 I am reliant on SEPTA 45 Bus, a half
21 block from my house in South Philly.
22 I use SEPTA Bus and Subway to get to
23 my doctors here in Center City. I
24 use SEPTA Bus and Subway to get the

1 theaters, social events, to get to
2 Amtrak and the -- or airport.

3 None of us have been
4 consulted on the proposed Community
5 Benefits Agreement or CBA, which
6 would earmark \$50-million for
7 initiatives both, citywide and for
8 neighborhoods closest to the arena.
9 Critics have pointed out the
10 community stakeholders were not
11 involved in drafting the CPA.

12 It would've been easy to
13 get our feedback, just go to the
14 Kennedy House or William Penn House
15 West Broad or the Hopkins House or
16 Independence Place in Washington
17 Square West, that's full of us.
18 Vision Zero. I've heard no mention
19 of this during the past two years of
20 discussions about this proposed
21 arena. I've heard no mention of
22 this.

23 I read in there, it says,
24 Complete Streets projects help us

1 work towards achieving zero vision.
2 Vision Zero, a collaborative
3 citywide effort to eliminate traffic
4 deaths and serious injuries on
5 streets. Just go to
6 visionzerophl.com.

7 Regarding SEPTA, I think
8 -- I think you said Councilman --
9 Councilmember Cindy Bass, I thank
10 you for raising the concern about
11 SEPTA, and that was just last week
12 and I read that you explained that
13 you met with SEPTA officials and I
14 read the quote SEPTA is saying that
15 they're not paying for these costs.
16 So who is?

17 Thank you, Councilman
18 Isaiah Thomas for asking about the
19 CBA. So I'm almost finished. I
20 particularly am addressing six of
21 you. The six of you that are on the
22 Public Health Committee.
23 Councilmembers Nina Ahmad, Quetcy
24 Lozada, Isaiah Thomas, Mike

1 Driscoll, Cindy Bass and Rue Landau.
2 I say to you, please listen to what
3 the former health commissioner of
4 Philadelphia said recently.

5 Plus the more than 3,000
6 doctors and physicians for social
7 responsibility. And please listen
8 to those brave doctors, EMTs, ER
9 techs, and medical workers who have
10 put their names in support of No
11 Arena, Jeff Med. This, despite the
12 lip service of Jefferson CEO, who
13 has only been in his job two years,
14 that he said he thought they could
15 coexist with each other.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON: It's time, ma'am.

18 MS. OLSEN: One more.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

20 JOHNSON: You're my elder, so I
21 don't want no smoke. I don't want
22 no trouble.

23 MS. OLSEN: Okay.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1 JOHNSON:

2 Okay. Thank you for your
3 -- for your testimony, ma'am. State
4 your name for the record, please.

5 PUBLIC SPEAKER MAJOR:

6 Okay. Good morning.
7 Buenos dias, Philadelphia. My name
8 is Lynn Major. A little nervous
9 here. This is the first time I've
10 ever spoken in these chambers, but
11 maybe not last. I live in West
12 Philly. I'm a constituent of
13 councilmember Gauthier. Speaking
14 about Bill 240966, I really
15 appreciate this opportunity to
16 speak.

17 I'm an educator and a
18 musician and a proud parent of two
19 recent School District of
20 Philadelphia High school graduates
21 just down the road from here. Like
22 me, they also relied on SEPTA. We
23 need SEPTA. We need SEPTA to
24 function, keep functioning.

1 I'm coming at this issue
2 from the perspective of being, as
3 you can see, a Sixers fan. So, you
4 know, there's that. For better or
5 for worse, the Sixers should stay
6 where they are in South Philly.
7 That's where they belong.

8 I'm also a long-time
9 basketball player myself. Aside
10 from having been an involved parent
11 in the school district, I've also
12 been a tutor in Philly Public
13 schools. I've gotten to know quite
14 a number of students and their
15 families and can really see what's
16 at stake.

17 I've been a resident of
18 Philadelphia, voting and tax paying
19 for a great many years now. A lady
20 never tells her age, but I'm getting
21 up there. So yeah, I got skin in
22 the game here.

23 Why do I strongly oppose
24 this 76 Place idea to be built at --

1 in the -- at the proposed site? So
2 many reasons, many of which have
3 already been very clearly stated.
4 I'm going to just give some
5 historical perspective thinking in
6 terms of half century milestones.
7 That's not my time, is it? Oh,
8 okay. 1976. I remember the
9 bicentennial.

10 We're coming up on 2026.
11 The semiquincentennial celebration.
12 It is a great opportunity to feel
13 civic pride. 2076, would 76 Place
14 even still be standing?
15 Questionable. I think we can figure
16 this one out. Thank you.

17 CHIEF CLERK: Thank you.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

19 JOHNSON: Thank you, Ms. Major.

20 MR. KYU: Good morning.
21 Good morning. My name is Dave Kyu.
22 Before I read my written remarks,
23 I'll just note I was a sportswriter
24 for The Philadelphia Citizen in 2020

1 and 2021.

2 I wrote about why us,
3 Eagles fans hate the Dallas Cowboys
4 so much. But I also wrote about,
5 you know, the Sixers ownership
6 during the pandemic. They were the
7 first and last basketball team to
8 ask its -- all of its employees to
9 take a pay cut to endure the
10 pandemic. So I'm a little biased.
11 I'll admit, you know, I don't think
12 they'd be good employers. I don't
13 think they'd be good community
14 partners.

15 So good morning again.
16 My name is Dave Kyu. I'm here to
17 talk about process today. I'm the
18 executive director of Asian Arts
19 Initiative where I've had the
20 privilege of working with -- in
21 Chinatown for the last 15 years.

22 I was also once a city
23 employee working in the Office of
24 Arts and Culture in the Nutter

1 administration. So Council members
2 know this as well as I do that the
3 civil servants that make up our city
4 are tirelessly dedicated to fair
5 process and a government that serves
6 the people of Philadelphia.

7 Chinatown has been asking
8 to be at the table for our voices to
9 be heard since day one of this arena
10 proposal.

11 Instead, this mayor has
12 applied the full weight of her
13 authority against the door to keep
14 us out so she could sell out the
15 people of Philadelphia to the -- to
16 the developers behind closed doors.
17 This process has been shameful and
18 disrespectful to the 69 percent of
19 Philadelphians who oppose the arena.

20 Not only to those people,
21 but to all Philadelphians who have
22 had no chance to weigh in on this on
23 the -- on the whole negotiation for
24 the last two and a half years when

1 we've known about this proposal,
2 we've had no opportunity for this
3 hearing, for finally to have any
4 discussion -- public discussion
5 about the arena.

6 But it's not too late.
7 This is not a done deal. We invite
8 Council to remember your values as
9 civic servants and vote "no" on this
10 shameful process. We must tell the
11 mayor that this process is not the
12 standard that we should be setting
13 for the rest of her administration.

14 Just a few weeks for
15 Council to consider this proposal
16 and this negotiation to consider
17 such a major proposal is not nearly
18 enough time. If she thinks this is
19 a good idea, then bring Council to
20 the negotiating table, bring the
21 community, bring the press, bring
22 the unions. What does she have to
23 hide?

24 We know a rush job when

1 we see one and we, the people of
2 Philadelphia, ask our government to
3 serve the people, not the
4 billionaires. We do not trust this
5 process. And the only conscionable
6 vote for Council to make on this
7 process is "no." Thank you for your
8 time.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON: Thank you. State your
11 name for the record and begin,
12 please.

13 PUBLIC SPEAKER VOLZ:

14 Good morning. My name is Sunhee
15 Volz and I'm the Environmental
16 Justice Program Manager with the
17 Asian American Community Fund of
18 Pennsylvania. I grew up in Council
19 District 10. I've lived in the city
20 most of my life and I'm here to
21 voice my strong opposition to this
22 package of bills.

23 The Arena project poses a
24 threat to environmental health and

1 public well-being in Center City and
2 surrounding communities that the
3 impact studies have not even
4 considered.

5 Air pollution is the
6 biggest threat to public health for
7 people in urban areas, and
8 Philadelphia regularly has some of
9 the worst air pollution in the
10 country. Philadelphia's
11 concentrations of particulate matter
12 2.5 are three times higher than the
13 Pennsylvania average.

14 And downtown Philly has
15 one of the most polluted census
16 tracts in the city -- in the region.
17 I'm sorry. The 19107 zip code has
18 the worst particulate matter
19 exposure in the city.

20 Anyone who lives, works,
21 shops or hangs out in Center City is
22 exposed to this pollution.
23 Children, the elderly, and people
24 with preexisting respiratory issues

1 are particularly at risk. And even
2 short term exposure to particulate
3 matter can cause health impacts and
4 worsen existing conditions.

5 Exposure to particulate
6 matter pollution can raise a
7 person's risk of asthma attacks,
8 heart attacks, and diesel
9 particulate matter from trucks has
10 been linked to lung cancer.

11 Particulate matter 2.5 is so small
12 that it enters the bloodstream and
13 vital organs.

14 The biggest source of air
15 pollution in the city is
16 transportation. A recent study
17 showed Philadelphia has the fourth
18 most congested roads in the country.
19 Chinatown is a neighborhood with
20 little tree cover, no public green
21 space and is divided by the Vine
22 Street Expressway.

23 Every stage of
24 demolition, construction and

1 operation of the arena will produce
2 more air pollution. Why build an
3 arena here in this spot that only
4 worsens air pollution for an
5 historically overburdened community?

6 The people of
7 Pennsylvania have a constitutional
8 right to clean air. That is not
9 being valued here. Why is there not
10 a comprehensive plan for development
11 that gets us to the city's climate
12 goals that provides jobs on projects
13 that create sustainable communities
14 and a sustainable environment and
15 not billionaire interests? Thank
16 you.

17 MS. CHANG: Good morning.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

19 JOHNSON: Good morning.

20 MS. CHANG: Morning. My
21 name's Jeena Chang. I live in Old
22 Kensington and I oppose this bill.
23 You might've seen my five-month old
24 trying to join the testimony. I'm

1 also a mom of a three-year-old who's
2 in pre-K, and in just one month,
3 five of his classmates were sent to
4 the ER because our rec center's
5 playground is literally falling
6 apart.

7 We were promised
8 renovations around this time,
9 actually, but instead, the city just
10 slapped some construction tape up
11 around the most dangerous areas. No
12 renovations. We're told not enough
13 money.

14 I take my kids to a
15 nearby library, actually in
16 Councilor Squilla's district, and
17 this week it closed indefinitely.
18 They -- the heater broke and the
19 librarian said that the contractor
20 came, but he won't fix it.
21 Apparently, the city still owes this
22 contractor \$400,000 in previous HVAC
23 bills. Again, we're told not enough
24 money. Well, to the billionaires

1 who want a \$400 million tax freebie,
2 it's time they're told not enough
3 money.

4 That's money that we need
5 to keep our schools from shutting
6 down, our libraries warm this
7 winter, and our rec centers safe.
8 For years, the city has told
9 residents to make do, get scrappy,
10 stretch every dollar.

11 Meanwhile, this pilot
12 hemorrhages out money, millions of
13 dollars, on the backs of residents
14 who actually pay their taxes. Why
15 waive a \$400 million bill for some
16 billionaires when the city can't
17 even pay its own \$400,000 bill to
18 keep its library open. Council
19 members, this math does not add up.

20 And to councilmember
21 Lozada, my councilmember, throughout
22 your career, your heart has been for
23 the many immigrant families in our
24 district. I urge you to protect the

1 District 7 families from being
2 shortchanged and strong armed by
3 this bad arena deal. Thank you.

4 MS. YOUNG: Good morning,
5 Council. My name is Shirley Young.
6 I am a resident of Philadelphia,
7 born and raised. I am the president
8 of the Hingwayan Homeowners
9 Association that consists of 51
10 homeowners in Chinatown. A unique
11 housing complex that has common area
12 and we make it work and it's great.

13 I am a member of the
14 Chinatown Neighborhood Advisory
15 Committee. So as a resident
16 homeowner, I am against this arena.
17 Ever since two years ago, none of
18 the talks has involved homeowners
19 and the businesses in Chinatown, and
20 it affects it.

21 Someone made the case
22 about, well, the arena is not in
23 Chinatown, we're -- it's bordering
24 right there. Market East Gallery

1 was bordering. It impacts
2 Chinatown. You cannot say it
3 doesn't impact Chinatown. We --
4 Chinatown has been here for over 150
5 years. We are a driving community
6 of homeowners, small businesses,
7 residents, and it's not even just
8 that.

9 We have relatives,
10 friends, neighbors that come to
11 Chinatown to take care, to shop, to
12 take care of people. So the traffic
13 definitely is always the main
14 concern. They're doing the
15 Chinatown Stitch to repair the
16 damage that the Vine Street
17 Expressway has done to Chinatown.

18 The arena will not
19 benefit Chinatown. It will decimate
20 Chinatown. There's proof of that in
21 cities that have arenas where
22 Chinatown is there. Chinatown is
23 decimated after that. So if you
24 vote yes on here, just have the

1 knowledge that you will be signing
2 the death now for Chinatown, for
3 Philadelphia and that will be your
4 legacy. The money -- the arena is
5 not the only option for Market East.
6 There are other options.

7 So please, I beg you that
8 just because they're throwing money
9 at you right now, that should not be
10 a consideration. Chinatown matters.
11 We count on you as City Council to
12 make a choice because Chinatown is
13 part of Philadelphia. Our
14 neighborhoods are very important to
15 Philadelphia.

16 We're not against the
17 union and the jobs and the 76ers,
18 but we want to survive and we want
19 to live and we want to contribute,
20 and we do as taxpayers, businesses,
21 homeowners, we're unique. So, you
22 know, so much more to say.

23 The process that has -- I
24 felt has been shoveled and jammed

1 down our throats. Chinatown
2 community is horrible. There's no
3 consideration. I feel like it's a
4 rough job. SEPTA's not even going
5 to support it. So the changes that
6 they have, one of my concerns is we
7 have senior citizens living in
8 Chinatown, but we also have senior
9 citizens living in other parts of
10 the city that take the bus routes,
11 and all that will change and that
12 impacts indirectly.

13 All right. So the one
14 area of -- arena impacts everybody's
15 lives, and you can't ignore that.
16 You have to pay attention about all
17 of that. It's not just the money
18 and the pack agreement. They're not
19 -- the owners are not paying enough
20 money to Philadelphia for having the
21 arena there. So please vote "no"
22 City Council.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON:

1 Thank you, ma'am.

2 CHIEF CLERK: Would

3 Calvin Williams, Deborah Kodish,

4 Derek Schwartz and Rev. Gregory

5 Holston, please come forward. You

6 will each have two minutes to make

7 your remarks. Again, Mr. Calvin

8 Williams, Deborah Kodish, Derek

9 Schwartz and Rev. Gregory Holston.

10 MS. KODISH: My name is

11 Deborah Kodish. I am founder and

12 longtime director of the

13 Philadelphia Folklore Project and a

14 co-founder of the Folk-Arts Cultural

15 Treasures Charter School in

16 Chinatown. I'm here to speak

17 against Bill 240966 and to ask you

18 to vote "no" on this harmful arena

19 legislation. Philly is known as the

20 poorest big city in the country, but

21 Philly is one of the richest cities

22 on the planet if we count social

23 movements, arts and culture, people,

24 heart.

1 This is a place of huge
2 cultural, social, intellectual, and
3 spiritual wealth. I have spent
4 decades in collaboration with
5 community-accountable visionaries
6 and institution builders, artists,
7 dancers, musicians, cultural workers
8 in Chinatown and across the city.
9 We are truly wealthy in our people,
10 and I am simply here to remind us
11 that Philadelphia Chinatown, 150
12 years old, richly diverse and
13 growing is a national, even
14 international cultural treasure. We
15 should act like it.

16 We should hold onto our
17 precious places. The harms of this
18 proposed arena cannot be mitigated
19 and are underestimated. I am part
20 of No Arena in Chinatown Solidarity.
21 Thousands of us now from all over
22 the -- all over Philadelphia who
23 have taken some kind of action to
24 tell you repeatedly, over the last

1 two years, why this is an extremely
2 bad idea.

3 We started organizing
4 because some of us directly
5 experienced what David Edelman and
6 others did to West Philadelphia. We
7 don't want to see more sacrifice
8 zones or sacrifice people.

9 We need community-driven
10 development, not the bad ideas of
11 three billionaires, motivated by
12 profit -- motivated by profit and
13 not the public good. Listen to the
14 people, be our people's champions.
15 And thank you to those of you who
16 have stood up against the steam
17 roller. I'm asking you all to
18 protect what is priceless. Vote
19 "no" on arena legislation. History
20 will remember your actions and so
21 will we. Thank you.

22 MR. SCHWARTZ: Good
23 morning. My name is Derek Schwartz.
24 I live in District 7. There are so

1 many reasons why I oppose this
2 arena, but today I want to speak
3 from my perspective as somebody
4 living with a chronic illness. My
5 long-term health is reliant on
6 having immediate and dependable
7 medical care. And when I'm rushing
8 to the hospital, I don't have the
9 time or the energy to cross-
10 reference the 76ers schedule, much
11 less to sit in gridlock traffic for
12 45 minutes.

13 Something that I really
14 value about living in Philadelphia
15 is the great medical infrastructure
16 that we have here. And this
17 legislation scares me because I feel
18 like the access to care that I rely
19 on is being bought and sold to the
20 Sixers in a deal that does nothing
21 for the people of Philadelphia.

22 Jefferson Hospital is the
23 only Level 1 trauma center in Center
24 City, and if that is no longer

1 accessible, then for many of us
2 there will be nowhere left to go and
3 that will inevitably result in
4 avoidable deaths.

5 This bill is threatening
6 the safety of chronically ill
7 people, disabled people, elderly
8 people, and anybody living with
9 serious medical conditions. And of
10 course, medical emergencies happen
11 to everybody. So if this arena is
12 built, we will all be less safe.

13 The 76ers aren't spending
14 any money to meaningfully address
15 the gridlock that this arena would
16 inevitably cause, and have shown
17 that they care more about lining
18 their pockets than they do about our
19 lives. Instead of supporting this
20 arena, I want to see city resources
21 going to support the workers and
22 infrastructure of our already
23 strained SEPTA system to schools and
24 to the city services that we

1 actually need.

2 With this vote, City
3 Council has the opportunity to
4 prioritize the safety of
5 Philadelphia residents over the
6 interests of billionaires. I'm
7 begging you to please stand with the
8 people. Thank you.

9 CHIEF CLERK: Would
10 Lilian Xie, Jamie Luck, Kelly Lam
11 and Elizabeth William, please come
12 forward. You each have two minutes
13 each to speak. Please state your
14 name for the record and begin with
15 your testimony.

16 MS. XIE: Good morning,
17 everyone. My name is Lilly Xie, and
18 I live in District 7. I am here
19 today because I strongly oppose this
20 bill. I'm an urban planner by
21 training, and I've witnessed large
22 scale development projects in a
23 number of cities. This arena is one
24 of the most destructive proposed

1 projects that I have seen. I want
2 to speak on the so-called Community
3 Benefits Agreement.

4 I've seen a lot of CBAs
5 in my time and I can confidently
6 tell you that this CBA is a joke.
7 It's an embarrassment and it makes a
8 mockery of what public process is
9 supposed to look like. No money for
10 SEPTA, no money for city
11 infrastructure, \$1.6 million split
12 between 600 Chinatown businesses,
13 which is basically \$37 per month per
14 business. On top of that, no input
15 from any community organizations.
16 This is the type of CBA that, as a
17 city planner, I will use as an
18 example of what not to accept.

19 At the end of the day, no
20 CBA would be enough by itself to
21 counter the sheer size and impact of
22 this development and its proximity
23 to vulnerable neighborhoods like
24 Chinatown. As planners, we know

1 that real protection for communities
2 is rooted in development strategies
3 and policies that stabilize and
4 protect neighborhoods for years to
5 come. Not just throwing money at
6 people for a few years and hoping
7 that that wins their approval. What
8 we really need are improvements to
9 basic city services, which again,
10 the Sixers are not putting a dollar
11 towards. Our schools need funding.
12 Our transit system need upgrades.
13 People need dignified jobs with
14 decent wages, including the city's
15 own staff who are currently
16 threatening to go on strike.

17 This resolution is asking
18 the people of Philadelphia, many of
19 whom are struggling to afford basic
20 things like rent and childcare, to
21 foot the bill for an arena whose
22 main purpose is align the pockets of
23 the ultra-wealthy. This is not good
24 development, this is not good city

1 planning. This is exploitation. I
2 urge you to reject this proposal.
3 Thank you.

4 PUBLIC SPEAKER WILLIAMS:

5 Hello, my name is Elizabeth
6 Williams. I live in the Gayborhood
7 with my wife Molly Forline, who is a
8 doctor at Jefferson Einstein
9 Hospital. I'm speaking on behalf of
10 Molly today because she's unable to
11 attend any of the hearings due to
12 staffing shortages at the hospital.

13 I read the 195-page Lung
14 and Traffic impact study, which
15 compared three facilities in New
16 York and two in San Francisco. This
17 obviously skews the numbers to look
18 more like New York. We are not like
19 New York. New York has 45 percent
20 car ownership. Philly and San
21 Francisco both have 70 percent.

22 I've been in SF on game
23 day. I waited 40 minutes to move
24 three blocks. I thought there must

1 be an accident up ahead. I was
2 told, no, this is game day. More
3 alarmingly, the study does not
4 include any streets south of Market.
5 It only looks north up to Cuthbert.
6 There are -- sorry. Callowhill.
7 The arena will impact traffic all
8 around it, not only on one side.

9 Additionally, the
10 proposed ride share drop-off in
11 pickup points require cars to cross
12 Market Street so in order to access
13 or depart. So obviously traffic
14 south of Market will be impacted and
15 gridlock is going to happen.

16 I'd like to keep in mind
17 a group that hasn't been mentioned
18 during these discussions; expecting
19 mothers and newborn babies. Molly
20 was born premature and her lungs
21 were underdeveloped. With not a
22 neonatal intensive care unit, NICU,
23 she would've suffocated and died.

24 As you know, Center

1 City's only Level 1 trauma centers
2 in the area that will be impacted by
3 gridlock, but so is Pennsylvania
4 Hospital, home to the largest NICU
5 in the region. The only two
6 hospitals with NICUs that are south
7 of Temple University are in the
8 impacted area. This can be the
9 difference for high risk pregnancies
10 between life and death for both
11 mother and child. You don't choose
12 when you go into labor and you can't
13 schedule it around arena events.

14 I've heard lots of
15 testimony about the ways that the
16 arena will benefit the Black
17 community, but this is one area
18 where the Black community is
19 disproportionately negatively
20 impacted. According to the American
21 College of Obstetrics and
22 Gynecology, rates of maternal
23 mortality are three to four times
24 higher for Black mothers.

1 In Molly's experience
2 serving a primarily Black
3 population, the majority of her
4 patients are high risk. These are
5 our most vulnerable new mothers at
6 the most vulnerable moments of their
7 lives. There are a lot of
8 complexities impacting their
9 outcomes, but I ask you, are you
10 willing to make it worse?

11 Pennsylvania Hospital
12 delivers 5,000 babies annually, 13
13 to 14 a day. That's over 15 percent
14 -- a 50 percent chance during any
15 given hour that a mother is giving
16 birth. By voting "yes" to this
17 bill, you're saying that their lives
18 are expendable and you are willing
19 to take them as collateral damage.

20 What will you say to a
21 mother who gives birth in the
22 backseat during standstill traffic
23 and loses her baby to preventable --
24 any of the thousands of preventable

1 things that can go wrong during
2 childbirth? Will you say, I knew
3 this was a possibility and I chose
4 to accept that and worsen your odds.
5 Thank you.

6 MS. LUCK: Good morning
7 members of Council. My name is
8 Jamie Luck and I'm here with the No
9 Arena and Chinatown Solidarity
10 Organization. Today, I have the
11 privilege to read a statement that
12 was prepared by 105 businesses and
13 organizations within Chinatown.

14 To all members of City
15 Council, on behalf of the 105
16 undersigned organizations
17 representing the voices, residents
18 and businesses of Chinatown and the
19 vicinity, we the undersigned, issue
20 a clear statement opposing the
21 proposed community benefits
22 agreement and request City Council
23 and councilmember -- Councilmember
24 Mark Squilla to delay the

1 legislative timeline.

2 A Community Benefits

3 Agreement must be negotiated with

4 the impacted community. The

5 proposed CBA never included the

6 concerns of residents, businesses,

7 and civic organizations whose lives

8 and livelihoods will be directly and

9 immediately impacted by the proposed

10 legislation. Our exclusion from

11 this process is unacceptable.

12 The proposed CBA fails to

13 address the following core issues.

14 Less than 10% of the \$50 million

15 within the CBA will go towards

16 Chinatown despite it being the most

17 impacted community.

18 This money is less than

19 half of one percent of the value of

20 the project. An amount that is

21 inadequate for the anticipated rise

22 in rent and housing costs, small

23 business displacement and job

24 losses, traffic and construction

1 nightmares, and impacts on
2 Chinatown's basic livability.

3 Second, no money is
4 allocated for housing and rent
5 relief, and no money for housing and
6 rent relief is directed towards
7 Chinatown and impacted businesses in
8 the area. The community impact
9 study reported that more than half
10 of the 600 businesses in Chinatown
11 would suffer as a result of the
12 arena, yet the funding allocated via
13 the CBA wouldn't even cover the cost
14 of a single day of work for a
15 typical business.

16 As Lily noted earlier,
17 this works out to about \$37 per
18 month per business for the six years
19 of construction nightmares.

20 The CBA also allocates a
21 paltry \$3 million to a small lending
22 program that doesn't start until
23 2032, well after construction is
24 completed. This also amounts to

1 \$166 per business per year. Most of
2 the funds won't start for years, and
3 there are no protections for
4 Chinatown or any other neighborhood
5 if the Sixers fail to live up to
6 their agreement or turn out to be
7 poor managers of this project.

8 The Mayor's
9 administration refused multiple
10 requests for meetings throughout the
11 2024 calendar year, failing to
12 provide even basic updates to
13 concerned Chinatown residents. No
14 materials have been made available
15 in Chinese, violating the language
16 access mandate of the city. Thank
17 you.

18 MS. LAMB: Thank you.
19 Hello. I'm Kelly Lamb. I reside in
20 West Philadelphia and I also
21 organize with the No Arena in the
22 Heart of Our City coalition. And
23 I'll be continuing Jamie's testimony
24 on behalf of businesses and

1 residents in Chinatown. Community
2 residents of impacted areas deserve
3 a fair and inclusive process no
4 matter where we live.

5 We ask Council to respect
6 the voices of our neighborhood and
7 slow down the legislative process
8 until such time as community voices
9 are adequately included and our
10 concerns are appropriately
11 addressed.

12 Signed over 100
13 organizations, Pennsylvania United
14 Chinese Coalition, Chinese
15 Restaurant Association of Greater
16 Philadelphia, Philadelphia Ho Yu
17 Chinese American Association, Ho Yu
18 Chinese Folk Culture Center,
19 Philadelphia Mazou -- Culture
20 Exchange Association, Greater
21 Philadelphia United Chinese American
22 Chamber of Commerce, Concerned
23 Citizens of Chinatown, Guangxi
24 Association of Pennsylvania, Greater

1 Philadelphia.
2 Lianjiang Association,
3 Chinese Northeast Association of
4 USA, Greater Philadelphia Fujian
5 Association, Philadelphia Chinese
6 Opera Society, Southern Fujian East
7 Friendship Association of USA,
8 Philadelphia Overseas Chinese
9 Culture Exchange Association,
10 Pennsylvania Fujian Chamber of
11 Commerce USA, North American Fujian
12 Association, ANC Association,
13 Philadelphia Incorporated,
14 International Cultural Exchange
15 Association.
16 Philadelphia Sisters
17 Dance Group, the Pennsylvania
18 Chinese Businesses Association, the
19 Pennsylvania Citron Association,
20 World Sun Yat-sen Foundation, Cross
21 Strait Peaceful Development Forum,
22 St. Joseph University Chinese
23 Cultural Center, Pennsylvania United
24 Chinese Chamber of Commerce,

1 Philadelphia Taiwan Association.
2 Greater Philadelphia
3 Chang Xi Association, Asian American
4 Fellowship of Pennsylvania, CAST
5 Philadelphia, American Fujian
6 Chamber of Commerce, Greater
7 Philadelphia, Indonesian Chinese
8 American Association, Asian
9 Americans United, Folk-Arts Cultural
10 Charters -- Treasures Charter
11 School, Asian Arts Initiative,
12 Philadelphia Chinatown Dragon Boat
13 Team.
14 Philadelphia Suns, Asian
15 Pacific Islander Political Alliance,
16 Ginger Arts Center Students for the
17 Preservation of Chinatown, Students
18 Against the Sixers Arena, Chang
19 Association of Philadelphia, Chinese
20 Christian Church and Center.
21 Little Saigon Cafe,
22 Takeng Grocery, Jiang's Hair Salon,
23 Beijing Duck Seafood Restaurant,
24 Laosan Mubei Muyang Gongsì,

1 Mr. Noodle, AM Hair Salon, Bread Top
2 House, Teas Roshan, New Sea Cow,
3 Spicy Chu Shang Delicacies, MBL
4 Burger, Lonzo Hand-Pulled Noodles,
5 Shing Tea 79, Bubble Fish, Room 209,
6 More Sugar, Brew Beer and Beverage.
7 Rainbow Hair Salon, Four
8 Season Seafood LLC, Jin Chung
9 Trading Incorporated. New Hong Kong
10 Bakery, Ocean Harbor Restaurant, Tai
11 Hang Video Corp. Shi Miao Dao
12 Yunnan Rice Noodle, Tai Lake Seafood
13 Restaurant, Asia Bakery, Lee How
14 Fook, Little Seven House, Arch
15 Pharmacy, Designer Eyes, Jade and
16 Art Gift Shop, VBB, Bubble Tea.
17 JiangNan Philadelphia and
18 Style Studio, Siam Express, IP
19 Novelty Inc. Ebisu Japanese Life
20 Store, Mochinut. Hey Yogurt, Non
21 Zhou Hand Drawn Noodle House Inc.
22 China King, Happy DIY, Huge Family
23 Store, Super Acucare, Wayne Key
24 Hardware and Kitchen Supplies Inc.

1 Chinatown Dollar and Up
2 Dragon Spa, Central City Eyecare,
3 K&A Gift Shop, Heung Fa Chun Sweet
4 House, Banana Leaf Malaysian
5 cuisine, Drip Vietnamese Cafe, ePro
6 Associate Inc. Jibei Chuan Philly,
7 PC First Royalty Inc, Eagle
8 Hairstyling Salon, EMei Restaurant,
9 Long Life Chinese Herbs
10 Incorporated, XIX Restaurant, Love
11 Noodle restaurant and QT sandwiches.
12 Thank you, City Council.

13 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:

14 Thank you.

15 CHIEF CLERK: Would James
16 Schroder, Fern Lee Hagedorn, Marya
17 Camilleri and Michael McGettigan,
18 please come forward. You will each
19 have two minutes to speak. Thank
20 you.

21 MR. SCHRODER: Good
22 morning. My name is Jim. I've
23 lived in Philadelphia for 15 years.
24 This is my first time testifying.

1 If it's any measure of the interest
2 of the community in this process, I
3 know there are many of us who it's
4 our first time and who are here,
5 I'll say on our own time. I've
6 lived in West Philadelphia for 15
7 years.

8 Why does someone in West
9 Philadelphia have such concern about
10 this arena? Well, it could be
11 Chinatown, it's the Gayborhood, it's
12 Washington Square West who faced the
13 impact of billionaire developers
14 this time. But it will be my
15 neighborhood next time or rather it
16 has already been my neighborhood.

17 In fact, as a member of
18 Power interfaith, I've met with
19 neighbors all over the city and seen
20 that every one of our neighborhoods
21 is struggling to navigate the
22 consequences of billionaire
23 developers and billionaire
24 institutions.

1 Whether it's the arena,
2 the plans of universities for West
3 Philadelphia, the concerns around
4 Germantown High School redevelopment
5 or Logan Triangle. So I'm here
6 today to ask Council to recognize
7 that it isn't just this development
8 or these three neighborhoods.
9 Rather, this is a moment to stand
10 collectively to set a new standard
11 for what it looks like for great
12 businesses to do business in
13 partnership with Philadelphia.
14 Here's what I mean. I've
15 been pleased since the beginning to
16 hear that leaders in Council and the
17 administration clearly state the
18 city will not provide funding to
19 billionaires seeking to make a few
20 billion more. Seemed like a basic
21 baseline expectation.
22 Unfortunately, now that we see the
23 bills in front of us, we find that
24 standard has lowered.

1 You may have different
2 words for it here in Council, but as
3 a constituent, when I hear about a
4 scheme to donate land and lease it
5 back in order to avoid paying 400
6 million, maybe 600 million in
7 property taxes, I call that a public
8 subsidy. I'm a homeowner.

9 You might say here that
10 you haven't raised taxes in the past
11 few years, but I'm paying 60 percent
12 more in property taxes to the city
13 than I did three years ago. If I
14 can and indeed I have to, then the
15 billionaires can also. If their
16 business plan does not have the
17 margin for them to pay their share
18 in taxes, then it isn't a very good
19 business plan.

20 If their business plan
21 does not have the margin for them to
22 pay for increased public services
23 that they will require, transit,
24 security, safety, then it isn't a

1 very good business plan. If this is
2 the best deal the city has ever
3 seen, then it is time for this City
4 Council to raise the standard.
5 Billionaires should come here to do
6 business not in the city, but in
7 partnership with the city.

8 Council should raise the
9 expectation. We welcome businesses
10 that partner with Philadelphia. We
11 do not welcome billionaires who can
12 only make their billions more by
13 avoiding paying their taxes and by
14 not contributing to the schools and
15 shared infrastructure of the city.
16 The rest of us do our part. The
17 billionaires should do theirs. Vote
18 "no." Thank you.

19 MS. HAGEDORN: Good
20 morning. My name is Fern Lee
21 Hagedorn. I live in South
22 Philadelphia in District 2, Council
23 President Johnson's district. And
24 before I say anything, I want to

1 thank those Councilmembers who are
2 here because I see there are some
3 empty seats. I am speaking on Bill
4 240966. I oppose the building of
5 the 76ers arena in its proposed
6 location. I grew up in Chinatown in
7 New York City, 71 years later, those
8 formative years helped shape who I
9 am today.

10 Thankfully, there is a
11 Chinatown here for young people, and
12 I hope that Chinatown will be here
13 for years to come. But imagine what
14 this project will do to Chinatown in
15 its proposed location. The arena
16 project is not for the common good.
17 The developers talk about minimal
18 disruption and trying to assure us
19 that construction will only be a
20 temporary inconvenience. But who
21 are they kidding? This is not just
22 disruption, this is not just
23 construction, this is destruction.

24 Breaking ground is not a

1 one-day job. For days on end, there
2 will be constant sounds of
3 bulldozers, dump trucks, smashing
4 concrete, loud drilling. Exhaust
5 and dirt will fill the air and land
6 on cars and windows. Children will
7 slip in the mud as water lines are
8 replaced. The elderly will not be
9 able to safely cross a street.

10 Construction will go on
11 not for a month, but for six years,
12 from early morning into the evening.
13 Is this a livable environment? As a
14 result, daily life will be hell.
15 Chinatown will become a dug up
16 neighborhood, people will avoid
17 going there, the construction will
18 drive residents out and bring in
19 other forces to build market rate
20 condominiums.

21 The destruction will be
22 long-term and may be permanent. Six
23 years can mean a slow death for
24 Chinatown. It happened in

1 Washington DC. The permanent
2 destruction of Chinatown will happen
3 if this project is approved. You,
4 City Council, have the power to put
5 a stop to the destruction of
6 Chinatown. Do not be destroyers of
7 Chinatown. Thank you.

8 PUBLIC SPEAKER CAMILLERI:

9 Hi. My name is Marya Camilleri, and
10 I live in Council District 3. I
11 oppose Bill Number 240966. Thank
12 you to all of the Council members
13 who are asking tough questions of
14 Mayor Parker and of the three
15 billionaires who did not even show
16 up to the hearings for the project
17 that they're trying to fast track.
18 I'm a public-school parent with a
19 child in 4th Grade at Folk-Arts
20 Cultural Treasure School, also known
21 as FACTS in Chinatown.

22 We live in West Philly
23 and we love our neighborhood. But
24 my partner and -- my partner and I,

1 both mixed -- both from mixed race
2 immigrant families, have felt in --
3 at home in Chinatown for 20 plus
4 years. FACTS is a unique, diverse,
5 inclusive community that values
6 identity, language and culture of
7 origin. Families are actively
8 involved in their children's
9 education and the school nurtures
10 academic excellence alongside social
11 justice, empathy and anti-racism.
12 Folk arts are woven into
13 the curriculum and creativity is
14 essential to learning. FACTS is in
15 a vibrant, resilient neighborhood
16 with 150 years of history, full of
17 small businesses that our family
18 supports frequently. I worry about
19 the impact of six years of arena
20 demolition and construction on this
21 community.
22 When I walk from the EL
23 to FACTS, I see the harm that the
24 Vine Street Expressway and

1 Convention Center inflicted on
2 Chinatown, replacing hundreds of
3 homes and small businesses with
4 dangerous intersections, shadowy
5 tunnels, and empty storefronts.

6 This neighborhood does
7 not need another massive building
8 that sits -- that sits empty most of
9 the time. My child will graduate
10 8th Grade at FACTS before the arena
11 is scheduled to be completed.
12 That's four years of breathing in
13 construction related pollution and
14 navigating disruptions to public
15 transit.

16 I've lived in West Philly
17 long enough to remember how the EL
18 construction devastated 52nd Street.
19 And I fear Chinatown could suffer a
20 similar fate. Every child deserves
21 to go to a safe clean school and get
22 a quality education regardless of
23 zip code.

24 Sadly, thousands of

1 Philadelphia families are deprived
2 of a school experience that they
3 love, forced to send their kids to
4 crumbling unhealthy buildings. The
5 school district is again warning of
6 school closures, reopening wounds
7 from the 2013 closings. The city is
8 dedicating less time to the school
9 closure hearings than an arena that
10 78% of Philadelphians think should
11 not be a priority for Council.

12 It is unacceptable that
13 City Council has cleared schedule
14 for 40 hours of hearings on the
15 vanity project of three billionaires
16 who don't live in the city and have
17 a proven track record of broken
18 promises and predatory development.

19 City Council, I urge you
20 keep doing your research, keep
21 asking these hard questions and
22 don't rush this legislation. Don't
23 give these billionaires what amounts
24 to a \$1 billion tax break when our

1 public schools and public transit
2 are in crisis. Please vote "no" on
3 this bill. Thank you.

4 MR. MCGETTIGAN: Hello.

5 Yeah. My name is Michael
6 McGettigan. I sell and repair
7 bicycles in Philadelphia. My son
8 went to Philly Public Schools, and
9 in three years if all works well, he
10 will be an MD. On November 5th, a
11 little more recently, we saw what
12 happens when oligarchs get their
13 way. Recently an oligarch just
14 outside Philadelphia cried out, I
15 want to control my own destiny
16 because my team's lease, which I
17 signed off on, doesn't allow us to
18 make a second billion dollars
19 quickly enough.

20 Accordingly, for my
21 corporation's benefits, I require
22 the Mayor of Philadelphia and City
23 Council to foreclose on the
24 destinies of Philadelphia's business

1 owners, residents, workers, as well
2 as patients and staff at nearby
3 hospitals.

4 Oh, don't forget SEPTA
5 passengers, Market East, Wash West
6 and the Gayborhood and the majority
7 of Philadelphians who will oppose
8 tax dollars and city property going
9 to my currently two and 11
10 basketball team project. That's a
11 lot of destinies to put a smile on
12 an oligarch's face just as long as
13 that property makes him happy and
14 then he will need a more expensive
15 stadium that seems to happen.

16 We older folks have lived
17 through half a dozen Philly mayors
18 who have failed to even whisper
19 about a real plan for the space
20 between City Hall and the Delaware,
21 or asked the community what that
22 plan should look like and why there
23 are so many empty parking lots to
24 Disney Hole, et cetera, et cetera,

1 et cetera. Those are owned by
2 oligarchs who just are like, well
3 it's not a rich enough payday, let's
4 keep a surface parking. That's why
5 Market Street's got a problem.

6 As one of the first plans
7 cities in America, Philly must not
8 let a couple of squabbling
9 billionaires to take a sharpie to
10 our plans for Market East, for
11 Chinatown, for the historic
12 district, for Wash West.

13 And -- but wait, how does
14 Stadium deals work out in other big
15 cities? The answer to that is
16 clear, not one reputable study has
17 found pro sports facilities to be a
18 valid economic strategy. Everybody
19 on City Council knows that, the
20 mayors knows that, that's the -- the
21 studies say it, taxpayers always end
22 up taking a loss.

23 Before an oligarch got
24 upset with how fast he was getting

1 through his second billion dollars,
2 there were real plans for Market
3 East. Let's foreground them at a
4 special four-day session as City
5 Council instead of doing damage
6 control for an oligarchs vape dream.

7 The 76 Place -- the last
8 part of this is division. The 76
9 Place debate is already damaging our
10 society. Its backers have worked
11 really hard to declare Chinatown as
12 the only problem and we'll pay them
13 off with some community benefits
14 bucks, we just have to figure out
15 what we can buy them for.

16 At the same time, they
17 are widening and exploiting an
18 existing division between
19 Philadelphia's Black and Asian
20 communities. That is a cost the
21 studies haven't mentioned and the
22 studies cannot quantify, and that's
23 something that has to be solved in
24 this century before we build a

1 basketball stadium.

2 76 Place is dividing our
3 urbanites between those who feel
4 that we should take whatever a
5 developer gives us and be grateful
6 for it, and those who say true
7 expert planning that raises all
8 boats is what we should see. And we
9 are already seeing that on Market
10 East.

11 If you look on the south
12 side of Market Street, there's
13 people putting their money where
14 their mouth is, and nine in six
15 years is happening now, creating
16 jobs. We have heard a union leader
17 announce with a straight face that
18 the home, the base, the home place
19 of our convention center, our
20 biggest hotels, our famous Reading
21 Terminal Market, our world class
22 Chinatown, our historic district is
23 desolate and it's dangerous.

24 Creating a division

1 between a major union and the
2 citizens who get up in the morning,
3 head over to that area, to Market
4 East, to Chinatown, to Wash West and
5 he creates a division between these
6 citizens who live and work hard
7 there every day to meet the
8 challenges of city life.

9 We know what it looks
10 like there, and we still show up for
11 work, we still show up to shop, the
12 Reading Terminal Market, we support
13 this. That is a cost that's not in
14 any of the studies when a union
15 worker stands up and says that the
16 place is -- there's a blank hole
17 country, he's telling it -- he's
18 saying that, he's saying bad things
19 happen in Philadelphia. We live
20 here, we know better.

21 Chinatown is currently
22 united, but if 76 Place backers
23 succeed, I really hate to say this,
24 but I've seen it happen with the

1 Casino Bucks and elsewhere. If the
2 76 Place backers succeed, how will
3 Chinatown bridge the gap between
4 those in its community who folded
5 and who took the CBA cash and those
6 who resisted and who were left out
7 of that? And we've already heard 25
8 times today that it's not enough
9 money anyway to solve the problem.

10 I have not yet heard
11 anyone connected with this project
12 say what an incredible economic
13 engine Chinatown is. How much they
14 make a year, 500 bill -- a bill?
15 Who knows? I'd love to hear that
16 number. We haven't heard it, we
17 just keep hearing a billionaire -- a
18 billionaire this is going to give us
19 a billion. That's a cost that's not
20 in any of the studies that division
21 that could happen in Chinatown
22 that's already happening between the
23 Black and the Asian communities in
24 Philadelphia.

1 That's so many -- that's
2 one of the costs we've heard, and
3 there's so many more that other
4 people have said better than me, and
5 that will say better than me
6 afterwards. We already know 76
7 Place arena will bring no real
8 economic benefits to that city -- to
9 our city.

10 Even the studies they
11 paid for bear this out. The math
12 has been done, the time is now to
13 continue doing the complicated work
14 of reviving Market East and
15 Chinatown, and not looking at this
16 billionaire's kind of some sort of
17 savior. Is -- Council Person
18 Squilla, is the Mayor here?

19 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:
20 Yes.

21 MR. MCGETTIGAN: Okay.
22 Yeah. With greatest respect, Mayor
23 Parker, Council Person Squilla do
24 not try to play, and I say this as a

1 person who was born in Philly 70
2 years ago, okay, Councilmember
3 Squilla, Mayor Parker, do not try to
4 play poker with these oligarchs,
5 they hold all the cards, they've
6 already changed the deal, you're
7 going to -- I don't want to lose my
8 shirt just because you have hold of
9 it for a moment and you want to make
10 this guy happy. They changed the
11 deal multiple times. Don't try to
12 play poker with these guys, work
13 with the community that's here.

14 CHIEF CLERK: Sir.

15 MR. MCGETTIGAN: Asking
16 you to do the right thing. Thank
17 you.

18 CHIEF CLERK: Thank you.
19 Would Michael Ciul, Pierce Jordan,
20 Kate Carey and Craig Heim. Please
21 come forward. Again, that's Michael
22 Ciul, Pierce Jordan, Kate Carey and
23 Craig Heim, please come forward.
24 You will each have two minutes to

1 speak.

2 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:

3 Please state your name for the
4 record and proceed.

5 MR. CIUL: Hi, my name is
6 Mike Ciul. I live in the 3rd
7 District, West Philly. Thank you,
8 Councilmember Gauthier, for your
9 support. I'm really nervous. And I
10 want to thank everyone who's come
11 here to speak, I know how much
12 courage it takes to come here, and I
13 know there are a lot of people that
14 they couldn't make it, so I'll do my
15 best.

16 I have been car free all
17 my life by choice. I've chosen to
18 live in West Philly, very close to
19 the L. And I love Philadelphia,
20 it's such a great walkable city, I
21 take SEPTA everywhere. We have a
22 great Chinatown, we have a great
23 sports complex and we have a great
24 subway line to connect them.

1 I would hate to ruin all
2 of those things by building
3 something we don't need in a place
4 that is already amazing, wonderful.
5 I sang with Mendelssohn Club way
6 back to celebrate the 125th
7 anniversary of Chinatown, we got to
8 sing in Chinese. We sang the Yellow
9 River Cantata, and it was such a
10 great experience, it made me so
11 proud of my city. And it was only a
12 few years later that they said they
13 were going to build a stadium there.
14 I thought, what an insult, what a
15 slap in the face to the people of
16 Philadelphia.

17 And then they said they
18 were going to build a casino, I'm so
19 glad we stopped those things from
20 happening. I can't believe anybody
21 buys the story that this arena is
22 going to bring business to the
23 neighborhood.

24 I was at the convention

1 center for an event recently, and we
2 were hungry, we wanted to eat lunch
3 and I knew we were on our -- we
4 could go to Reading Terminal, but
5 those buildings are built like
6 fortresses. They're designed to
7 keep visitors in and neighbors out.
8 That's enough. Thank you so much.
9 Thank you for listening.

10 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:

11 Thank you for your testimony.
12 Please state your name for the
13 record and proceed.

14 PUBLIC SPEAKER CAREY:

15 Good morning, everyone.
16 Councilmembers and everyone else, my
17 name is Kate Carey. I'm not part of
18 any organizations, I'm just a
19 regular person. I am a lifelong
20 Philly resident, my family has lived
21 here for generations, half of which
22 have been firefighters, paramedics,
23 and the other half union truckers,
24 HVAC technicians and mechanics. For

1 the last seven years, I live in
2 District 10, which for those of you
3 who don't know is very far
4 northeast.

5 So if you're wondering
6 why someone who lives so far from
7 the proposed site of the arena is so
8 opposed to it, it does affect all of
9 us. On my -- and it is a bad deal
10 for Philadelphia.

11 On my hour-and-a-half
12 each way ride on SEPTA to my job in
13 Center City every day, I often
14 overhear neighbors on the bus
15 discussing their concerns about this
16 Sixers arena as well. Whenever
17 there is a marathon on the parkway
18 or a street festival in the
19 Gayborhood, the traffic congestion,
20 SEPTA delays and rerouting are
21 already so frustrating. Not to
22 mention that the city's only trauma
23 one center is mere miles away from
24 the proposed site.

1 And when every second
2 counts in an emergency, this traffic
3 added will cost lives. Giving the
4 proposed Sixers Arena a property tax
5 break when our transit system is
6 already struggling to the point of
7 cutting routes and increasing fares,
8 housing prices are climbing and
9 public schools are barely hanging
10 on, is -- sorry, I'm a little
11 nervous, is a waste of our
12 resources, frankly, and I'm not
13 willing to sacrifice another vibrant
14 community of hardworking people for
15 a bunch of billionaires. Thank you.

16 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:
17 Thank you. Thank you. Please state
18 your name for the record and proceed
19 with your testimony.

20 MR. HEIM: Good morning.
21 My name is Craig Heim. I'm a Sixers
22 fan from the amazing community of
23 East Mount Airy in the 8th District
24 where I've lived for 25 years. Over

1 the past several months, I've spoken
2 with staff from all 17
3 Councilmembers' office and shared my
4 strongly held view that the Sixers
5 Arena absolutely should not be built
6 in Center City.

7 Without exception, these
8 staff members have been
9 professional, friendly, and
10 responsive in recording my
11 opposition. I contacted all the
12 Councilmembers because this issue is
13 not about one community or one
14 Council district. It's about the
15 entire city of Philadelphia and what
16 it means to be part of a
17 neighborhood. One Philly, a United
18 City. It's a citywide concern and
19 as an elected official I wanted to
20 make sure every one of you had my
21 input.

22 The 76ers own economic
23 study make it clear that this
24 project would profoundly, negatively

1 impact the Chinatown community,
2 people's homes and businesses will
3 be ruined for the financial gains of
4 a handful of billionaire investors.
5 Support for this proposal is callous
6 approval of the destruction of a
7 vibrant Philadelphia community.
8 Don't let it happen.

9 One of the economic
10 benefits cited in the 76ers study is
11 quote, increased competitive pricing
12 of stadium suites in a city with two
13 arenas. How far from the reality of
14 everyday Philadelphia citizens is
15 this finding in a city where the
16 vast majority of residents can't
17 afford to go to a game? Why should
18 we care about luxury suite prices?
19 The idea that Chinatown is the only
20 viable location in Philadelphia for
21 a new arena is absurd.

22 CHIEF CLERK: Thank you
23 for your testimony. Would Lien Vu,
24 Jack Koch, Megan Malkemes and Emma

1 Thorp, please come forward. Again,
2 Lien Vu, Jack Koch, Megan Malkemes
3 and Emma Thorp, please come forward.
4 You'll each have two minutes to
5 speak.

6 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:

7 Thank you. Please state your name
8 for the record and proceed with your
9 testimony.

10 MS. VU: Hi. My name is
11 Lien Vu and I am the president of
12 OCA Advocates Greater Philadelphia.
13 We are the local chapter of a
14 national Asian American Civil Rights
15 organization that's been around for
16 over 50 years. Our organization has
17 witnessed - has witnessed Chinatowns
18 and similar communities across the
19 country, threaten and decimated by
20 the construction of sports arenas.

21 These projects often
22 promise to create jobs and boost
23 local businesses, as you've heard,
24 but in reality, they represent the

1 death rattle of these community's
2 history and cultural identity.

3 Take for example, the
4 Capitol Arena in Washington D.C.,
5 which opened in 1997. This arena
6 led to the collapse of D.C.'s
7 Chinatown displacing long-term
8 residents and small businesses, and
9 eroding the community's cultural
10 identity. Residents describe the
11 impact as devastating, watching as
12 promises of economic support for
13 small businesses failed to
14 materialize. I was there at that
15 time.

16 Similarly, in Brooklyn,
17 the construction of the Barclays
18 Center disproportionately forced out
19 communities of color. Rent
20 increases primarily affected lower
21 income residents, while higher
22 income individuals could afford the
23 changes leading to significant
24 displacement.

1 Now we face a similar
2 threat with this proposal. Economic
3 studies consistently, like you've
4 heard, show the reports that sports
5 arenas do not increase tax revenues
6 for their local areas. If more
7 money is needed, the 76ers
8 developers have stated that the even
9 the community benefit agreement will
10 not increase.

11 OCIGP hasn't seen no
12 efforts from the city or developers
13 to address community concerns about
14 displacement, cultural preservation,
15 or the everyday impacts of
16 construction on traffic, SEPTA
17 transit, schools, churches, et
18 cetera. From what we have seen so
19 far, this arena will devastate
20 Philadelphia's nationally
21 recognized, one of the oldest
22 Chinatowns in the nation. Just as
23 the Capitol Arena destroyed D.C.'s
24 Chinatown and the Barclays Center,

1 the forced out communities of color
2 in Brooklyn. Thank you.

3 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:

4 Please state your name for the
5 record and proceed.

6 MR. KOCH: My name is
7 Jack Koch. A lot of shock clock
8 violations tonight here. I live in
9 Philly, I'm also a business agent
10 for the Elevator Constructors Union
11 Local 5. There is nothing more
12 important than having a job to
13 support your family and the dignity
14 of work. This arena will provide
15 jobs during the construction, after
16 the construction is finished also.
17 This arena will spark growth on the
18 East Market, which desperately needs
19 it right now.

20 Within this growth, there
21 will be more jobs and more end of
22 the day -- and at the end of the
23 day, permanent jobs. The city will
24 have more restaurants, bars, places

1 to go. Nothing worthwhile is easy,
2 but at the end of the day, this will
3 definitely be a positive for our
4 city. Thank you.

5 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:

6 Thank you for your testimony.
7 Please state your name and proceed.

8 MS. MALKEMES: Hello. My
9 name is Megan Malkemes. I'm a
10 constituent of Councilmember
11 Squilla, and I'm a social policy
12 student here in the city, and I'm
13 here to express my total opposition
14 to the construction of the 76ers
15 arena.

16 As a taxpayer in this
17 city, I'm strongly against \$400
18 million of tax revenue that could
19 and should be invested in the youth,
20 families, and workers of the city
21 being wasted on an unnecessary
22 expenditure that has been met with
23 such outspoken opposition.

24 I'm also strongly against

1 the advancement of any development
2 project that threatens to decimate
3 up to 50% of small business in its
4 surrounding communities. As someone
5 who arrived to Philadelphia, in part
6 because I can no longer afford to
7 live in my hometown of Boston,
8 Massachusetts, I'm all too familiar
9 with the failure of community
10 benefits agreements to prevent
11 displacement and result in
12 substantial benefit for the
13 residents most impacted by
14 gentrification.

15 As someone who relies on
16 SEPTA for transportation and has
17 been a retail worker in Center City,
18 I'm also all too familiar with how
19 SEPTA disruptions interfere with the
20 economic stability of low income
21 workers who risk workplace penalties
22 with SEPTA dysfunction as it impacts
23 their commute.

24 And lastly, as an

1 emerging policy professional who
2 intends to remain in the city, I
3 believe that when presented with
4 such clear opposition to a project
5 that data indicates will harm its
6 constituency at the level of
7 housing, employment, and healthcare,
8 just to name a few, that City
9 Council should act in the interest
10 of its community stakeholders and
11 the community members of Chinatown
12 who are at risk of displacement over
13 the interest of a handful of
14 billionaires. Thank you.

15 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:
16 Thank you. Please state your name
17 for the record and proceed.

18 MS. THORP: Thanks. My
19 name is Emma Thorp, I have been a
20 resident of Philadelphia for 10
21 years. I grew up in the D.C. area.
22 And every time my father visits, he
23 is just overwhelmed by the amount of
24 small independent businesses we have

1 in this city. Unique -- Philly is
2 really unique in how many small,
3 locally owned businesses we have.
4 If my father wants a cup of coffee
5 that is in a Starbucks, he has to
6 drive 20 minutes. Here I can walk
7 five minutes from my apartment and
8 run into three or four locally owned
9 coffee shops.

10 I remember, you know,
11 when I was a teen, you know, being a
12 bad kid going around D.C.'s
13 Chinatown, by that time I was old
14 enough -- by the time I was old
15 enough to do that on my own, there
16 -- it was completely stripped of any
17 kind of local character or local
18 business. Every business was a
19 chain, every restaurant was
20 nationally owned.

21 Here, if you walk down
22 D.C. or Philly's Chinatown, it is
23 unrecognizable from D.C.'s
24 Chinatown. There is dozens of

1 independent businesses on every
2 block, there is -- you know, you
3 could eat out every single night for
4 a week and still be going to
5 independent locally owned
6 businesses.

7 I was very concerned by
8 the impact study that said 50% of
9 businesses would be negatively
10 impacted by that, and we've heard at
11 this hearing today that, you know,
12 over 150 local Chinatown businesses
13 are opposed to this plan because
14 they worry that, you know, it may
15 close their business.

16 And that is something
17 that if we, you know, if the arena
18 goes through, we would see, you
19 know, a pop -- we would see that the
20 businesses are being negatively
21 affected and we would lose what
22 makes Philly so characteristic and
23 so unique and what other cities have
24 mourned losing.

1 In addition, I just also
2 wanted to speak how wonderful it is
3 how many union members we have. I
4 think unions and construction is the
5 lifeblood of any city, and it
6 saddens me that we are seeing it as
7 unions and constructions versus the
8 people and culture when really it
9 should be all of us versus the
10 billionaires that have depleted the
11 city of its resources, making it
12 impossible.

13 Making it so the city
14 doesn't have money to spend on
15 publics and hire unions to repair
16 things like parks and schools, and
17 in fact can't even pay the bills to
18 the contractors that have been hired
19 for those things. So yeah, thank
20 you so much for your time. Go
21 Philly.

22 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:

23 Thank you for your testimony.

24 CHIEF CLERK: Would

1 Sherrie Cohen, Ben Fileccia, Lillian
2 Austin, and Yvette Young and Roxanna
3 Taginia, please come forward.

4 Again, Sherrie Cohen, Ben Fileccia,
5 Lillian Austin, Yvette Young and
6 Roxanna Taginia, please come
7 forward.

8 You will each have two
9 minutes to speak.

10 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:

11 Thank you. Please state your name
12 for the record and proceed.

13 MS. COHEN: Good morning.

14 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Good
15 morning.

16 MS. COHEN: My name is
17 Sherrie Cohen. I'm a community
18 activist attorney and I live in the
19 8th Council District. I came here
20 to speak against the arena
21 legislation and to urge you do not
22 sacrifice Chinatown on the altar of
23 billionaires. I have three points.
24 Number one, history. Philadelphia's

1 Chinatown, one of the last surviving
2 Chinatowns in the U.S. was founded
3 in 1871, over 150 years ago.

4 Last year it was named as
5 one of America's 11 most endangered
6 historic places by the National
7 Trust for Historic Preservation to,
8 quote, raise awareness about the
9 threat facing one of nation's
10 greatest treasures.

11 This national
12 organization recognized the threat
13 to Chinatown's existence caused by
14 76th place. Do you? In 2026, the
15 250th anniversary of the founding of
16 the U.S. We'll celebrate as "one
17 Philly" -- oh, I'm sorry. Will we
18 celebrate as "one Philly" the word
19 of our mayor, or will we no longer
20 be one Philly because we have
21 consigned one of our nation's
22 greatest communities to displacement
23 and decimation.

24 Number two, housing.

1 While we debate whether one team
2 should get a new home when they
3 already have a home, isn't the more
4 important question, what are we
5 doing about all the Philadelphians
6 who really need a home? We have an
7 affordable housing crisis with more
8 than 70,000 households on the wait
9 list for publicly subsidized
10 housing. And about 50% of renters
11 are cost burdened.

12 Number three, one Philly.
13 I dare say that most of us are still
14 reeling from a certain election that
15 took place two weeks ago. That was
16 when an orange billionaire used the
17 familiar playbook of divide and
18 conquer and won. Let us now not let
19 three billionaires, I don't know if
20 they're orange, divide and conquer
21 us.

22 As our mayor says, let us
23 be "one Philly." Let us stand
24 together in solidarity with

1 Chinatown today and when Chinatown
2 celebrates the 250th anniversary of
3 its founding in Philadelphia. Thank
4 you.

5 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:

6 Thank you. Thank you for your
7 testimony. Please state your name
8 for the record and proceed.

9 MR. FILECCIA: Thank you.
10 Good morning, Council.

11 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:
12 Morning.

13 MR. FILECCIA: My name is
14 Ben Fileccia. I'm a lifelong
15 Philadelphia resident and the senior
16 vice president of the Pennsylvania
17 Restaurant and Lodging Association.
18 The PRLA appreciates Mayor Cherelle
19 Parker's thoughtful and
20 collaborative approach, navigating
21 conversations happening at City Hall
22 around the development of a new
23 arena for Philadelphia 76ers in
24 Center City and commends the mayor

1 for her diligent leadership.

2 Mayor Parker's stance on
3 keeping this iconic team in
4 Philadelphia is not only a win for
5 the city's sports fans, but also a
6 bold step towards driving economic
7 growth and reinforcing the strength
8 of the hospitality sector. Mayor
9 Parker has been a long champion of
10 hospitality, and this bold
11 endorsement makes clear her
12 commitment to our industry and her
13 promise to attract more visitors to
14 Philadelphia.

15 Since taking office, she
16 has made great strides to our -- to
17 cut bureaucratic red tape,
18 streamlined services. And by
19 forming the Mayor's business action
20 team will make operating in
21 Philadelphia easier and more
22 appealing for our businesses. These
23 actions reflect her vision of a city
24 that is both economically vibrant

1 and hospitable to operators across
2 all industries.

3 As this project
4 progresses, PRLA looks forward to
5 actively engaging with all
6 stakeholders, including the over
7 80,000 service workers in the region
8 to ensure this development benefits
9 both the local economy and the
10 hospitality community, which is
11 critical to Philadelphia's continued
12 success as a premier destination.

13 Thank you.

14 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:

15 Thank you. Please state
16 your name for the record and
17 proceed.

18 PUBLIC SPEAKER TIGINIA:

19 Hi, Councilmembers and fellow
20 residents. My name is Roxanna
21 Tiginia, and I live in South
22 Philadelphia in the 1st District. I
23 oppose the arena plan as this would
24 decimate today's vibrant Chinatown.

1 And to understand a bit of what we
2 can expect here in Philadelphia, I
3 wanted to speak a little bit on the
4 decision makings of D.C. back in
5 the 80s and 90s to see what is in
6 store for Philadelphia.

7 D.C.'s Chinatown served
8 as a home and a community hub for
9 Chinese immigrants reaching a
10 majority of the neighborhood
11 population occupying 69% of the
12 neighborhood according to the U.S.
13 census. However, D.C. government
14 had different plans for this area.

15 Despite calls from the
16 Chinatown community in D.C. for
17 support and community development,
18 D.C. officials made way to build
19 out a convention center, a
20 commercial mall, and an arena, which
21 sounds very familiar to our
22 Chinatown area today.

23 This resulted in further
24 increasing property prices and

1 displacing countless Chinese
2 businesses and residents. By 2015,
3 the Chinese population had dwindled
4 drastically with the 2020 census
5 reporting only 18% of Chinatown
6 residents being Asian American.
7 This marks the highest decrease in
8 Asian American residents out of any
9 city in the United States, over a
10 40% decline.

11 I bring all of this as an
12 example of what we can expect with
13 this arena. We can expect a
14 disrupted Chinatown, we can expect a
15 majority of its residents to be
16 displaced because it's happened
17 before. We've seen it in D.C.

18 D.C.'s Chinatown
19 exemplifies how poor decision making
20 from city leaders can result in a
21 broken, fragmented community
22 sterilization of an important
23 cultural hub and a displacement of
24 families and thousands of residents.

1 So I ask you all Councilmembers to
2 consider the long lasting effects
3 your decision will have on this
4 already incredible neighborhood in
5 Chinatown, and to stand with the
6 majority of Philadelphians who
7 oppose this deal. Thank you.

8 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:

9 Thank you for your testimony.

10 CHIEF CLERK: That
11 concludes our witness list for
12 today. Thank you all for coming.

13 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:

14 Thank you very much, Council. We'll
15 stand in recess until 1:30 this
16 afternoon. Thank you.

17 (Lunch recess taken.)

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

19 JOHNSON:

20 Good afternoon, everyone.

21 Good afternoon, everyone.

22 Today is definitely a
23 good day. As I look at my Chairman
24 of Labor over there and my Chairman

1 of Transportation, and members of
2 Council, we've all advocated and
3 sent the letter to accepted to
4 strike a good, fair deal with the
5 workers at TW, which we now are
6 going to reach. I just want to
7 thank the members of this body for
8 their advocacy and being supportive
9 of those efforts.

10 To the matter at hand,
11 now, we have several panels that
12 will be speaking today regarding the
13 legislation before us today
14 regarding the proposed arena, 76ers
15 arena. And so what we're going to
16 do is call up the several panels for
17 today. Well, Mr. Christmas, please
18 call the first panel.

19 CHIEF CLERK: Walter
20 Tsaou. Walter Tsoau, Raymond
21 Palidora, Ellie Yu, Randall Drain,
22 please come forward. Two minutes.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON: Two minutes.

1 CHIEF CLERK: You will
2 each have two minutes to speak.
3 Thank you.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
5 JOHNSON:

6 How are you doing,
7 Walter? How are you today?

8 PUBLIC SPEAKER TSAOU:
9 Thank you so much.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

11 JOHNSON: State your name fully for
12 the record and please begin.

13 PUBLIC SPEAKER TSAOU:

14 Okay. My name is
15 Dr. Walter Tsaou. I'm the former
16 Health Commissioner of Philadelphia.
17 I'm a Mount Airy resident and in the
18 8th Councilmanic District. The
19 owners of the Sixers had a vision of
20 putting a Center City arena, but
21 they never surveyed their most
22 important customers, their fans.
23 They have touted the idea
24 that only the Sixers Arena can

1 revitalize East Market Street, but
2 they are wrong. As the reality of
3 the unanswered problems of this
4 arena, opposition has grown not just
5 from Chinatown, but Washington
6 Square West and the Gayborhood.

7 The JMT study of traffic
8 depends on at least 40% of Sixers
9 fans taking SEPTA to the game or
10 risk intractable gridlock. Such
11 gridlock could also increase
12 particulate matter, for example, in
13 our atmosphere. This dystopian
14 reality of ambulances being unable
15 to bring their heart attack or
16 bleeding patients to timely care was
17 not of concern to the Sixers owners.

18 The JMT traffic study
19 doesn't consider the reality of
20 Philadelphia, where a shooting at
21 the Lombard Station happened just
22 yesterday, nor does it consider The
23 Flower Show or other large events
24 that will clog up all the parking

1 garages in Center City.

2 SEPTA, which all ready
3 faces tremendous budgetary problems,
4 will have to negotiate keeping the
5 rails running while having a large
6 construction overhead on top of
7 Jefferson Station. This is also
8 unfunded. SEPTA is an essential
9 route for primary care and
10 prevention for its patients. If the
11 goal is to revitalize East Market
12 Street, we should have a public
13 participation processes noted in
14 recent inquire article.

15 A serious promise is dead
16 zone created by the federal
17 buildings between 7th and 5th
18 Street, which basically closes after
19 5:00 p.m. If you want to revitalize
20 that area, why don't you build a
21 second Christmas market on
22 Independence Mall? It would at
23 least revitalize that part of East
24 Market Street from Spring tourists

1 to Winter residents.

2 The vitality for streets
3 comes with people, which means
4 strengthening public transportation,
5 including an inner city bus
6 terminal, and maybe even ferry
7 service between South Jersey and
8 Penn's Landing. This could bring
9 thousands of visitors to East Market
10 Street door to stop.

11 Of note, it is young
12 immigrants starting families, buying
13 diapers and other essential goods
14 who fill our retail stores. We must
15 fight mass deportation and preserve
16 our immigrant population in
17 Philadelphia. There's been a level
18 of disrespect that needs to be
19 stated. No respect for what it
20 would do to SEPTA, the surrounding
21 neighborhoods, access for emergency
22 vehicles or the opinions of the
23 Sixers fans themselves, or for that
24 matter, this City Council.

1 As Councilman Bass noted,
2 the owners didn't even bother to
3 show up. Why do these billionaires
4 so categorically reject the sports
5 complex, which is somehow good
6 enough for the Flyers, Eagles and
7 Phillies? If they want to build a
8 stadium arena so badly, why not
9 build it there?

10 What is -- what is their
11 beef with Wells -- Wells Fargo
12 Center, which has just undergone
13 \$400 million in renovations? Well,
14 let's put it this way. If your
15 mother spent \$400 million fixing up
16 your bedroom and you said, "I'm not
17 moving there." She will say, "You
18 deserve a spanking." Well, City
19 Council, you are the adults in the
20 room, and you need to give these
21 billionaires a spanking, and let
22 them know as every neighborhood
23 around this proposed arena has said,
24 do not build it here. Thank you.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON:

3 Please state your name,
4 for the record, and please begin.

5 PUBLIC SPEAKER PALIDORA:

6 My name is Raymond
7 Palidora. I'm born and raised here
8 in Philadelphia. I lived in South
9 Philadelphia my whole life, District
10 1, represented by Councilman Mark
11 Squilla. I've been working in
12 medical oncology research at
13 Jefferson for about 10 years now.
14 I'm here to express concerns about
15 the proposed Sixers arena in Center
16 City, and its potential impact on
17 patients, the quality of care, and
18 the important work that all of us
19 healthcare workers do every day.
20 At Jefferson, we care for
21 vulnerable patients, including those
22 with cancer where timely access to
23 treatment is essential. An arena in
24 such a busy area will create traffic

1 and accessibility issues, making it
2 harder for patients to reach the
3 hospital on time, which can
4 negatively impact their care and
5 overall health outcomes.

6 As someone who is
7 involved in cancer research, I know
8 firsthand how important it's to
9 maintain a stable environment for
10 those patients and healthcare staff.

11 Increased congestion
12 around the hospital in this area
13 will not only affect our patients,
14 but also affect hospital employees,
15 researchers, students, healthcare
16 workers, all who travel in and out
17 of the area on a daily basis.

18 Delays in getting to work can lead
19 to disruptions in clinical care
20 schedules and slow down the
21 essential research that happens
22 there everyday.

23 Our research
24 collaborations with external

1 partners and the delivery of
2 essential research materials like
3 brand new experimental cancer
4 treatments that I deal with all
5 would face delays, potentially
6 hindering the progress we've made in
7 advancing cancer treatments.

8 Outward shipments of
9 things like blood tests and tumor
10 biopsies that need 24-hour
11 processing would also be a delayed,
12 hindering research and treatment
13 further. We also have to remember
14 that this arena won't be built
15 overnight.

16 Before anything is
17 completed, there'll be years of
18 demolition and construction right
19 over Jefferson Station, one of the
20 busiest transportation hubs in the
21 city. During this time, trains will
22 be a delayed or stopped, streets
23 surrounding the hospital will be
24 blocked by cranes, construction

1 vehicles, and all the other
2 equipment.

3 This extended period of
4 disruption could severely affect our
5 ability to provide consistent and
6 timely care for patients.
7 Construction delays, road closures,
8 reduced public transit options, will
9 make it even harder for patients to
10 travel to their appointments or for
11 doctors and nurses to reach their
12 hospital on time.

13 For cancer patients in
14 particular, many of whom have all
15 ready have tightly scheduled
16 treatments, this arena could delay
17 this delicate schedule. A delayed
18 appointment is not just an
19 inconvenience for them. It can
20 directly impact their recovery and
21 treatment outcomes.

22 Some participants in my
23 studies have all ready expressed
24 concern about their proposed arena

1 and said they would try and schedule
2 their appointments around all the
3 different major events that would
4 happen there. This kind of
5 scheduling uncertainty would disrupt
6 care at various times throughout the
7 day leading to unpredictable patient
8 flow and creative backups in
9 critical areas like our infusion
10 centers.

11 So when patients avoid
12 certain times during the day, and
13 what I mean is, you know, the day
14 before or the day after an event,
15 the morning of the event, because
16 they want to get in and out of the
17 city, that puts stress on all the
18 scheduling for all the doctors.
19 Patients will be double booked and
20 all the care will be backed up.

21 While I understand the
22 desire to bring new business and
23 enter entertainment into the city,
24 and I understand the desire for the

1 Sixers organization looking for a
2 new home for the team, I'm not
3 against that. I believe it's
4 crucial to just find a better
5 location.

6 There's plenty of room
7 for the arena in different parts of
8 the city, and I'm sure we can find a
9 good home for the Sixers. Patients
10 and employees, and students' well-
11 being must come first and I
12 encourage City Council to consider
13 the consequences that this
14 development would have on the city's
15 health and the well-being of all of
16 our communities. Thank you.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

18 JOHNSON:

19 Thank you.

20 Please state your name
21 and begin your testimony.

22 MS. YU: My name is Ellie
23 Yu and I'm a queer and trans
24 community member from West Philly.

1 I'm a patient registrar and care
2 coordinator at the Mazzoni Health
3 Center, a primary care facility
4 centering LGBTQ plus folks in gender
5 affirming care and HIV treatment and
6 prevention.

7 I'm also a union
8 committee member of SEIU Healthcare;
9 Pennsylvania's largest union of
10 nurses and healthcare workers, and
11 the only chapter of SEIU Healthcare
12 PA located in the heart of
13 Philadelphia.

14 As healthcare workers
15 serving members of the community --
16 LGBTQ plus community, we are
17 firsthand witnesses of the impacts
18 of cultural erasure and limited
19 access to lifesaving healthcare.

20 A majority of our
21 patients, in addition to being queer
22 and trans, or living with HIV,
23 experience multiple health
24 disparities including housing

1 insecurity, food insecurity,
2 substance use, and overall
3 structural racism and systemic bias.
4 A majority of our patients have
5 incomes at or below 133% of the
6 federal income poverty line and come
7 to us to receive affordable,
8 judgment free, and affirming care.

9 In the early 1980s, when
10 the AIDS pandemic pushed our queer
11 community into the spotlight and
12 took the lives of many beloved
13 friends and family, Philadelphia
14 community members in the
15 Gayborhood and the rest of the city
16 came together to provide healthcare
17 and financial assistance to those
18 impacted by the epidemic when
19 federal, state, and local
20 governments failed to respond.

21 The Mazzoni Center where
22 I work, formerly, Philadelphia
23 Community Health Alternatives, is
24 one of many organizations that

1 emerged to provide care to
2 underserved residents in
3 Philadelphia.

4 Our secondary location,
5 which specializes in HIV and STI
6 prevention, treatment and education
7 is located in the Gayborhood on 12th
8 and locust, just a few blocks from
9 the proposed Sixers arena.

10 The proximity of the
11 proposed stadium to our center is
12 concerning, especially considering
13 this history -- of the city's
14 history of overlooking the needs and
15 concerns of the queer community.
16 The proximity of the arena threatens
17 the accessibility to the all ready
18 scarce free community at HIV and STI
19 testing in the city, which is
20 crucial in preventing the
21 transmission of these infections
22 becoming a public health crisis.

23 Additionally, over 80%
24 of our patients rely on public

1 transit to access care. SEPTA is
2 already facing a financial cliff.
3 There is no funding in the current
4 plans, Sixers games or money for the
5 SEPTA cleaning. The financial
6 burden of the arena cannot fall on
7 SEPTA users. Ordinarily,
8 Philadelphians who rely on SEPTA,
9 including our patients, cannot
10 afford additional fare increases.

11 This proximity hurts not
12 just our LGBTQ plus residents, but
13 every individual living in
14 Philadelphia. The Commission
15 Traffic Impact Studies have shown
16 that the introduction of 76 Place
17 will unequivocally worsen traffic
18 leading to Jefferson University
19 Hospital, Center City's only Level 1
20 adult trauma center of which there
21 are under 220 Level 1 adult trauma
22 centers across all 50 states.

23 These hospitals are
24 crucial in emergencies as they're

1 equipped to stabilize and treat the
2 most critical injuries. Patients
3 with the most life threatening
4 injuries need to be transferred here
5 from other facilities in order to
6 receive the appropriate treatment.

7 This means that in a
8 Level 1 trauma emergency where every
9 second counts, traffic congestion is
10 life threatening. While I'm not a
11 first responder or I do not work in
12 emergency room, I do know many of
13 our patients rely on Jefferson
14 University Hospital as the only
15 emergency room they are close enough
16 to get to.

17 I've seen the notes that
18 get sent to us from Jefferson when
19 our patients are admitted into their
20 emergency room. I've taken calls
21 from Jefferson notifying us of a
22 patient's death. I've listened to
23 family members of patients
24 expressing profound grief at the

1 passing of loved ones due to fatal
2 injuries. And I remember every
3 single one of our patients' names
4 who we've lost since -- lost since
5 their lives could be so easily
6 prevented.

7 I hope that you're all
8 able to take some time to consider
9 what it is would be gaining from
10 losing -- gaining and losing by this
11 arena being built. And if any of it
12 is worth listing the lives of
13 Philadelphia residents who put their
14 trust in you to represent them.
15 Thank you.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
17 JOHNSON: Thank you. State your
18 name for the record, sir. Please
19 begin.

20 DR. DRAIN: Hello. My
21 name is Dr. Randall Drain, and I
22 live in the District 5 near Broad
23 and Girard. I'm a lifelong resident
24 of Philadelphia and I was born and

1 raised in North Philly for
2 approximately 35 years. I treated
3 many wonderful patients as a
4 pediatrician in North Philadelphia
5 and West Philadelphia.

6 The majority of my
7 patients and their families that I
8 provided healthcare to were African
9 American. Currently, I go to
10 church in Chinatown at Renewal
11 Church, and I love this vibrant and
12 friendly community. I'm here today
13 not only because I love Chinatown,
14 but also because I feel called to
15 speak out as a physician who's now
16 retired.

17 Let us just review again
18 some of the alarming statistics.
19 Philadelphia's ambulance response
20 times are three minutes longer than
21 the industry standard for safety.
22 Only 33% of Philadelphia ambulances
23 make it to patients within the
24 recommended nine minutes. Center

1 City traffic is a large part of this
2 problem.

3 An arena would bring
4 thousands more vehicles into the
5 area at one time. The congestion
6 and gridlock from an arena would
7 slow down ambulances even more and
8 put patients' lives in danger.
9 Jefferson Hospital is an excellent
10 Level 1 trauma center, the only one
11 left in Center City, and they see
12 the most critically ill patients:
13 Trauma from gunshot wounds, car
14 accidents, heart attacks, strokes.
15 In these emergency cases, every
16 second matters. For every minute a
17 hospital arrival is delayed, a
18 patient's chances of dying are 5%
19 higher.

20 Healthcare is already
21 challenging for many African --
22 African American communities in
23 Philadelphia without having to
24 navigate the prospect of delayed

1 care during game -- during game
2 time. And just in summary, just
3 like you to consider to put private
4 interest, like the arena, not above
5 public health. We need to put
6 patients over profits.

7 Any plans for development
8 in Center City need to consider
9 public health first. We urge
10 decision makers like yourselves to
11 consider the impact to public health
12 and to do what is morally right and
13 just for all Philadelphians before
14 moving forward with plans to build
15 the arena. Thank you.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
17 JOHNSON: Thank you very much. Just
18 that one brief question before I
19 turn it over to my members. Your
20 testimony concerns were raised about
21 the proposed arena that might impact
22 traffic near Thomas Jefferson
23 University Hospital, potentially
24 affecting patient access.

1 However, on Tuesday,
2 November 12th, 2024, this City
3 Council heard from the
4 administration, meaning the Mayor's
5 administration, that an independent
6 analysis by OTIS, which is the
7 Office of Transportation
8 Infrastructure and Sustainability,
9 found that no significant impact on
10 the Jefferson Trauma Center with the
11 Jefferson CEO, and the CEO name is
12 Joseph Cacchione agreeing on that.

13 They stated that the 10th
14 Street corridor, they meaning the
15 CEO of Jefferson, Joseph Cacchione,
16 mentioned that the 10th Street
17 corridor will be reserved for
18 emergency access with police
19 ensuring the area remains clear.

20 So can you give me your
21 perspective on -- and I only asked
22 this question because we want to be
23 data driven as well. I asked this
24 question based upon that this CEO

1 who runs the hospital, his primary,
2 it's going to be his responsibility
3 to make sure that patients are
4 treated adequately and actually more
5 than adequately. And so for him to
6 come out and put his reputation out
7 there leading the actual hospital
8 that's subject for debate kind of
9 says a lot, but I wanted to hear
10 from all of you --

11 DR. DRAIN: I'll offer my
12 opinion, which is there's politics
13 involved here. He's curry favor
14 with the Mayor, with the building
15 trades, he needs them for his future
16 developments, and he realizes that
17 he's in a very difficult decision --
18 position. I have been told by many
19 staff people at Jefferson that they
20 have been asked not to speak about
21 this from a public relations
22 perspective.

23 And I think that common
24 sense should tell you that 10th

1 Street is only -- there's only two
2 lanes going down that street. I
3 don't know, are you going to have
4 the police block off all the
5 surrounding roads like they do for
6 festivals and so on? And how will
7 that actually make traffic
8 congestion even worse if they were
9 to do that?

10 So I just think that the
11 10th Street carter idea is a
12 fantasy, if you're going to have a
13 Sixers game and you expect people to
14 find parking spots? Common sense
15 should tell you that that doesn't
16 make any sense, frankly. And I
17 think common sense should prevail.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

19 JOHNSON:

20 I just wanted to put that
21 on the record. The next person I'm
22 going to call is Councilmember
23 Anthony Phillips.

24 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

1 Thank you, Council President. I
2 just -- Walter, correct? Yeah. So
3 I just had a question for you. You
4 mentioned that there should be a
5 space near the Independence Center
6 to do a market, some sort of like
7 marketplace that can help revitalize
8 that particular area near
9 Independence Hall. But I didn't --
10 maybe I didn't catch you correctly.

11 Did you mention what
12 would be a space other than the
13 arena that could replace to where
14 the current -- where the current,
15 you know, mall is right now? What
16 would be something that could be
17 worth investing in there?

18 PUBLIC SPEAKER TSAOU:
19 Well, you know, the -- I'm -- I'm
20 thinking of the Christmas market
21 which is surrounding this building
22 right now, which is a temporary
23 structure, which could surround
24 Independence Mall, for example.

1 But during -- when the
2 tourist season sort of ends in the
3 Fall, we could start having a
4 Christmas market around Independence
5 Mall and actually use it as a way of
6 getting people to come to the 5th
7 and 7th Street area, which usually
8 closes down after five o'clock.

9 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

10 But what -- what would
11 replace the --- the -- the Fashion
12 District? So that's down the
13 street, but I'm talking about the
14 Fashion District, so the mall.

15 PUBLIC SPEAKER TSAOU:

16 Well, I think, the Fashion District
17 suffers from the fact that there's
18 not enough people who come into the
19 town right now and shop there. And
20 its safety is a big issue. And
21 trying to improve safety is an
22 important part of that. But also,
23 the fact is that we have not --
24 we've taken away the bus terminal

1 from the city, we don't have a ferry
2 service that bring people from South
3 Jersey into the eastern part of
4 Philadelphia.

5 We could do a lot more
6 creative things to bring people in
7 here and we can preserve immigrant
8 families, like I said before, who
9 are the ones who are most likely to
10 buy essential goods for their kids
11 and their families. Not me -- I'm,
12 you know, I go out and go over
13 Broad, but I don't -- young people
14 --

15 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

16 Have you and your team
17 worked on finding, you know,
18 investors and so forth to, kind of,
19 like counteract this potential
20 development, like could actually pay
21 for something to replace that area.
22 And also would you be, if the Sixers
23 were to move to New Jersey, how do
24 you think Philadelphians would feel

1 about that?

2 PUBLIC SPEAKER TSAOU:

3 Well, I -- I'm -- I don't think
4 that would be a good idea
5 personally, but I -- my testimony is
6 why -- what's wrong with the sports
7 stadium? If you walk from the NRG
8 stadium to the Philly Citizens Bank
9 Park, there's like four blocks that
10 you have to walk through just to get
11 to the Citizens Bank Park. That's a
12 big open space there. Why don't you
13 put a Sixers arena there that faces
14 the Wells Fargo Center, they can
15 point their fingers at each other
16 and, you know, the building trades
17 can build something wonderful right
18 here in Philadelphia.

19 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

20 All right. Thank you.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

22 JOHNSON: The Chair recognizes

23 Councilmember Jamie Gauthier.

24 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

1 Good afternoon and thank
2 you for being here. I wanted to
3 delve into -- I also wanted to delve
4 into what seems to be a discrepancy
5 between how Jefferson leadership
6 views the proposed traffic plans
7 presented by the 76ers and how
8 Jefferson's emergency room and other
9 front line staff feel about the
10 plan.

11 So I think these
12 questions are for Raymond, but if
13 there are things that you can't
14 answer or are not privy to, then
15 that's fine.

16 First, am I correct in
17 understanding that Jefferson
18 leadership commissioned in an
19 internal study to understand the
20 traffic impact of the arena, or are
21 they using the city's transportation
22 impact study?

23 PUBLIC SPEAKER PALIDORA:

24 So from what I'm aware of, they said

1 they conducted their own, that
2 wasn't shared with employees, it
3 said there was going to be. I have
4 not seen it. I'm assuming they
5 might have used what the city had
6 seen and piggybacked off that for
7 some data, but I haven't seen
8 anything.

9 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

10 Can you talk about how
11 Jefferson's leadership informed or
12 engaged frontline staff in this
13 process? For example, was there a
14 town hall or a conversation with
15 staff that allowed people to express
16 concerns about traffic or perhaps an
17 anonymous survey of staff and, you
18 know, physicians and nursing staff?
19 What have those conversations looked
20 like?

21 PUBLIC SPEAKER PALIDORA:

22 Again, as far as I'm aware, not --
23 not a whole lot has been shared or
24 asked of staff. I believe there was

1 one -- one town hall where some
2 questions were brought up, and it
3 was going to be asked of the top to
4 kind of come down. Anytime I've
5 reached out for more information or
6 questions, it seemed that, again, it
7 was in the works and employees will
8 know and staff will know, but no
9 town halls or anything like that
10 have been really developed.

11 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

12 Can you talk about what
13 transpired at the town halls? What
14 was the overwhelming sentiment of
15 the staff?

16 PUBLIC SPEAKER PALIDORA:

17 So the -- the one town hall that I
18 knew, some questions might have been
19 brought up. I was not a part of.
20 So I can't particularly speak on
21 that from some other just colleagues
22 and things, there's a bunch of
23 different opinions on the arena
24 itself. But again, nothing official

1 is like a platform for us to really
2 share that.

3 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

4 Lastly, now that you have
5 this public forum, what would you
6 want Jefferson leadership to take
7 into consideration when they're
8 thinking about traffic around the
9 hospital?

10 PUBLIC SPEAKER PALIDORA:

11 Again, I mean, I think everyone's
12 concern seems to be just general
13 congestion, patient flow in and out,
14 and like I said, you know,
15 healthcare workers getting in and
16 out of the -- of the arena. And one
17 thing I've also said that seems to
18 also be kind of thought about is if
19 I'm a nurse working in my third
20 16-hour shift and I'm trying to get
21 home and now there's a two-hour
22 delay on a train, because there's a
23 Sixers arena, that's one thing.

24 But also patients coming

1 in and out, I think it just needs to
2 be considered of all the other
3 parking lots might not be taken care
4 of because there's an arena, so
5 patients have no place to park. So
6 I think that needs to be prioritized
7 before an event going on in Center
8 City.

9 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

10 Thank you. Thank you so
11 much, Council President.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

13 JOHNSON:

14 You are welcome. You're
15 welcome. Councilmember Jim Harrity.

16 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

17 Thank you, Council
18 President. And thank you for your
19 question, that was actually my first
20 question that I was going to ask
21 also. So just to follow up on that,
22 do you think that it would be
23 helpful to designate one lane in the
24 corridor of the hospital during

1 arena events to mitigate traffic
2 concerns? If we designated a lane
3 just to emergency vehicles?

4 PUBLIC SPEAKER TSAOU:

5 How -- is this the honor system?
6 How does this work that you have
7 police blocking parts of this
8 corridor and say --

9 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: I
10 mean --

11 PUBLIC SPEAKER TSAOU: --
12 or traffic cones or something, or?

13 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
14 I'm not trying to jerk you off, so
15 please don't try to jerk me off.

16 PUBLIC SPEAKER TSAOU:
17 Yeah, yeah.

18 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
19 All right. I asked a question, and
20 you'll show me the respect that I
21 deserve for my seat. Just like I'm
22 showing you the respect.

23 PUBLIC SPEAKER TSAOU:
24 Yes, I take it back.

1 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

2 That was an honest question. I'm
3 asking if there was a lane
4 designated for emergency traffic, do
5 you think that would mediate the
6 concerns? That was it.

7 PUBLIC SPEAKER TSAOU:

8 No, I don't think.

9 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

10 So you don't think so? Okay. Thank
11 you. I'm good. I'm good because I
12 need to calm down before I --

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON: Councilwoman man Rue
15 Landau.

16 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

17 Thank you, Council
18 President. I just wanted to take
19 one second for us to all think about
20 the fact that a lot of people are
21 coming here to express their
22 opinions on the project, pro or con
23 and also to do so sometimes, in a
24 general way and sometimes, in a

1 certain lane.

2 And I think it is --

3 would not be helpful for us to ask

4 just everybody, what do you think

5 should be built in this space as

6 well as we -- not everybody's an

7 expert on traffic studies also, I

8 think we should just, you know,

9 listen to what people are telling us

10 and try to ask questions that are

11 directed towards that, because I

12 think that's the way we can get the

13 most from, for example, this panel

14 of medical experts that we have.

15 Thank you.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON:

18 Thank you very much for

19 your testimony.

20 PUBLIC SPEAKER TSAOU:

21 Thank you.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

23 JOHNSON:

24 Will the clerk please

1 call the next panel?

2 CHIEF CLERK: Mark

3 Merlini, Dan Killinger, Ed Grose,

4 Rob Zuritsky, Paul Levy, please come

5 forward. You will each have two

6 minutes to speak. Thank you.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Rob, you want to start us

9 off?

10 PUBLIC SPEAKER ZURITSKY:

11 Sure.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

13 JOHNSON: It was good to see you.

14 PUBLIC SPEAKER ZURITSKY:

15 Good to see you.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON:

18 Mr. Zuritsky, good to see

19 you. Just start your name -- say

20 your name for the record, and please

21 begin your testimony.

22 PUBLIC SPEAKER ZURITSKY:

23 Good afternoon. My name is Robert

24 Zuritsky. I'm president and CEO of

1 Parkway Corporation, a company
2 proudly headquartered just three
3 blocks up North Broad Street. My
4 company has been in the parking
5 business in Philadelphia for 102
6 years, and is regarded as a national
7 leader in parking operations
8 technology and development.

9 Parkway is also a
10 national developer and owner of
11 office, residential, retail, medical
12 office, hospitality, and parking
13 with most of our developments taking
14 place in Center City, Philadelphia.

15 Interestingly, I believe
16 Parkway is the only developer with
17 direct experience building for sale,
18 affordable housing and parking in
19 Chinatown in the last 60 years.

20 Hospitality, retail,
21 parking in the convention center
22 district, medical office for Penn --
23 building medical office for Penn
24 Jefferson, and Wills Eye with retail

1 and parking in the medical district,
2 and one of the only developers in
3 the country who is building 880,000
4 square feet of build-to-suit office,
5 and certainly the only company
6 building that office in Center City,
7 Philadelphia.

8 I am happy to speak out
9 in favor of this project for many
10 reasons. Before the pandemic,
11 Center City, Philadelphia was on a
12 roll, and then everything went
13 backwards. Now we have office
14 buildings struggling, we have hotels
15 hurting because of a drop in
16 business, travel and meetings.
17 Retailers, restaurants are hurting
18 and closing, and public
19 transportation is suffering also
20 because of a lack of business
21 activity in Center City.

22 This arena will be the
23 newest, most high tech, best fan
24 experience in the world when it

1 opens. It can act as a catalyst to
2 encourage businesses to consider
3 moving and keeping their businesses
4 in town, and will encourage more
5 people to want to live in town,
6 because we have such a great,
7 walkable city. This arena will also
8 be another amenity for people to
9 want to use our hotels and
10 especially help SEPTA and PATCO.

11 This arena will act as a
12 catalyst to get other developments
13 started in the area.

14 I mentioned earlier all
15 the developments that we have done
16 around this area, but I didn't
17 mention the properties that we have
18 been trying to develop directly
19 nearest to The Gallery Fashion
20 District for 30 years and failed to
21 develop -- to develop them. This is
22 because Market East has struggled
23 for all that time, but having a
24 brand new Madison Square Garden,

1 best tech fan experience facility
2 will get this town cooking like the
3 other parts of Center City have
4 already experienced growth.

5 Lastly, I can assure you
6 that the parking and traffic during
7 construction and after the arena
8 will not be a concern. First of
9 all, we have inventoried 40 parking
10 facilities in that area, and 85% of
11 those parking spaces of the 14,000
12 spaces within a six-block walk are
13 available at six o'clock. We have
14 done the survey also during The
15 Flower Show and the car shows, and
16 there is adequate spaces to handle
17 this arena.

18 Secondly, the technology
19 exists today to disperse those
20 parkers; the season ticket holders
21 and prepaid parkers to 8-10 parking
22 facilities from 7th Street to Broad
23 Street. And you could give the
24 option for the parking facilities

1 that are closest to the homes of
2 where the people are coming.

3 So the traffic, actually,
4 will be easier to handle in Center
5 City than it is at the sports
6 complex now. The last thing about
7 parking is that you never want to
8 oversell these 8-10 parking
9 facilities. So those facilities can
10 still handle the hotel business, the
11 reading terminal market business,
12 whatever businesses that they are
13 currently serving. This will be a
14 wonderful opportunity for the
15 businesses in Philadelphia.

16 Bill Rouse told my father
17 when he was building the Kimmel
18 Center. My father asked him --
19 okay, sorry. My father asked him,
20 "Why are you only building a hundred
21 spaces underneath the Kimmel Center?
22 You could build 500 spaces and
23 handle most of the activity." Bill
24 Rouse said, "You want to disperse

1 the people so they walk by Steak 48,
2 the restaurants and the shops that
3 we have here." That is what a city
4 does, and that's how it benefits
5 from these arenas.

6 So to conclude, this city
7 needs this arena, we deserve to have
8 the best arena in the world, in the
9 Center City, and as another amenity
10 to attract the businesses and help
11 to keep all these businesses that we
12 have here.

13 If, God forbid, we lose
14 this opportunity, and a business
15 that exists in Philadelphia now
16 wants to invest a billion-and-a-half
17 dollars and expand into the city,
18 and we lose that opportunity, what
19 does that say to the rest of the
20 business community in the country
21 about the business environment in
22 Philadelphia? Please make a good
23 deal that does enough to help the
24 neighborhood, communities, but also

1 propels our city forward. Thank
2 you.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: Next.

5 PUBLIC SPEAKER MERLINI:

6 Good afternoon, members of the City
7 Council. My name is Mark Merlini.
8 I'm the managing partner of
9 Brickstone Realty, a real estate
10 development company in the city.
11 Over the past 38 years, we have
12 completed over 4.3 million square
13 feet of office retail and multi-
14 family development in Market East.

15 Although we are
16 developers, we are preservationists
17 at heart, as demonstrated by our
18 resurrection of the Lits building in
19 '87 into an office and retail
20 complex.

21 We converted City Hall
22 Annex into a 500 room Marriott
23 courtyard, and we restored the
24 Wanamaker building, which is 1.9

1 million square feet into office
2 retail and three levels of parking
3 below grade.

4 Lits and City Hall Annex
5 had been vacant for many years prior
6 to our restorations. We won two
7 National Trust honor awards
8 conferred by the National Trust for
9 Historic Preservation for the Lits
10 Building and Wanamaker building.

11 Our recent preservation
12 award-winning projects include the
13 Steele Building at 11th and Ludlow,
14 Bombs Building at 106 South 11th
15 Street, and the Hale Building at
16 Juniper and Chester Streets,
17 totaling almost 3.3 million square
18 feet of historic preservation in
19 Market East.

20 We are real estate
21 developers, we're preservationists,
22 and yes, we're our citizens who are
23 deeply concerned about Market East.
24 We opened the Lits building in May

1 of '87. I've walked Market Street
2 East everyday since then.

3 I have watched the demise
4 of Market Street with the closure of
5 Strawbridges, the Clover Store,
6 Strawbridge's Corporate
7 headquarters, JCPenney, and The
8 Gallery replaced with the failed
9 Fashion District.

10 We lost three major
11 retailers recently: Ross Dress For
12 Less, Target, and PetSmart at --
13 those stores were in the Chester
14 Street, Carter River and Collins
15 Project. Five Below's corporate
16 headquarters with over 500 employees
17 have been trying to get their
18 employees back into the office.

19 The biggest pushback is
20 safety. They're working with the
21 Philadelphia Police Department to
22 hire off duty officers to be present
23 at the corner of 8th and Market from
24 3:30 to 6:30 in the evening.

1 Westchester University
2 Center City campus is located in the
3 Lits building. They have security
4 officers to escort students after
5 their evening classes to parking
6 locations and transit stops. Pre
7 pandemic, our retail was 96%
8 occupied. It's currently 26%.
9 After 6:00 p.m., Market Street East
10 is empty except for panhandlers and
11 homeless. When our tenants leave
12 their offices on empty streets, they
13 do not feel safe and will not come
14 to work.

15 Wanamaker's offices are
16 over 55% vacant. When those office
17 leases expire, Market East will not
18 be on their radar screens unless
19 something dramatically changes. The
20 City of Philadelphia may not be on
21 their radar screens as well.

22 Our adjacent
23 neighborhoods should be more
24 concerned about getting people to

1 Market East rather than keeping them
2 from Market East. If we don't get
3 people to Market East, it'll be far
4 more detrimental to those
5 neighborhoods. People in the street
6 provide a veil of safety.

7 After working for nearly
8 four decades to improve Market
9 East, I can attest that this -- that
10 we need this arena. Most
11 importantly, we need the people that
12 the events at the arena will bring
13 to Market Street. I remember being
14 out with friends for dinner the
15 night of the presidential debate
16 that took place at the Constitution
17 Center, when my wife and I returned
18 to 8th and Market around nine
19 o'clock, Market Street was filled
20 with people providing an incredibly
21 energizing and safe feeling.

22 The arena is the -- only
23 the beginning. Its opening is six
24 years out, and there are many other

1 improvements from City Hall to
2 Independence Mall that must take
3 place on Market Street. We have an
4 arena to be the impetus to get this
5 done. Please vote "yes" to the
6 arena. Thank you.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: State your name and begin,
9 please.

10 PUBLIC SPEAKER KILLINGER:

11 Sure. Good afternoon. My name is
12 Daniel Killinger. I'm the President
13 of National Real Estate Development.
14 We are an independent operating
15 subsidiary of the National
16 Electrical Benefits Fund, a pension
17 fund plan that provides retirement
18 benefits to the International
19 Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
20 and the National Electrical
21 Contractors Association.
22 We are the developers of
23 East Market, a nearly 2 million
24 square foot development catty corner

1 from the proposed site of the new
2 arena between 11th and 12th Market
3 and Chestnut Streets, in the east --
4 along East Market corridor. Sure.

5 Since launching East
6 Market in 2014, our vision was to
7 create a project big enough to be a
8 catalyst for future growth along
9 Market Street. We envisioned it to
10 be a bridge connecting the Liberty
11 Bell, the -- the first piece as a
12 bridge to connect the Liberty Bell
13 to City Hall, the Convention Center
14 to Jefferson, and Midtown Village to
15 Chinatown.

16 Ten years later in over a
17 billion dollars invested, we've
18 realized our -- we've revitalized
19 this 4 acre site in -- along Market
20 Street with two residential towers,
21 about 100,000 square feet of retail,
22 a new hotel, and a 200,000-square
23 foot office building. This was
24 capped off recently by the opening

1 of our tremendous partnership with
2 Jefferson this year when we
3 delivered the Jefferson's Health
4 Honickman Center on 11th and
5 Chestnut Street.

6 This 10-year over billion
7 dollar investment was in our minds
8 the first step. The first piece
9 that would hopefully catalyze Market
10 Street East of City Hall. Market
11 Street East of City Hall deserves to
12 be a world class boulevard. This
13 city has been envisioned along
14 Market -- has been organized around
15 Market Street and Broad Street since
16 its inception. It has the potential
17 to link all of the neighborhoods
18 surrounding it.

19 As I mentioned, which was
20 the original vision of East Market,
21 there is an opportunity to -- with
22 our investment, with Parkway's
23 investment, with Brickstone's
24 investment, with Jefferson's

1 investment, to really be the
2 catalyst and really string together
3 a series of developments along
4 Market Street to bring it to its
5 potential glory.

6 If designed carefully and
7 thoughtfully, which I know the
8 Sixers have in their vision of a
9 truly state-of-the-art arena, 76
10 Place can not only help connect
11 neighborhoods, but it can also be a
12 potential beacon for public
13 transportation, a true center for
14 Jefferson Station, which now you
15 need to access off of Filbert Street
16 or off of 11th or 10th or 11th
17 Street, a really opportunity to
18 celebrate public transportation in
19 Center City.

20 It can create a
21 tremendous amount of jobs, that has
22 been communicated to this panel over
23 the past few weeks and contribute to
24 the vibrancy, safety, and security

1 of Market Street. We are excited to
2 see Market Street vision fulfilled
3 and support the future growth of the
4 arena. Thank you.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

6 JOHNSON: Thank you. Ed?

7 MR. GROSE: Good
8 afternoon. I want to start off by
9 thanking the committee of the whole
10 for the opportunity to testify
11 today. When I wrote my testimony,
12 I've been following the hearings
13 very closely in the news. I tried
14 to keep this brief and specific to
15 the hotel industry.

16 My name is Ed Grose. I
17 am the executive director of the
18 Greater Philadelphia Hotel
19 Association. GPHA serves the
20 interest of over 100 hotels,
21 including all Center City
22 properties, and we also represent
23 160 allied members who are companies
24 who do business with hotels

1 throughout the Delaware Valley.

2 Our members employ 14,000
3 residents, and we have over 38,000
4 guest rooms. Hotels generate over
5 \$143.4 million annually in tax
6 revenue for the Commonwealth and
7 city through real estate, wage,
8 liquor, use, and occupancy and
9 amusement taxes. Philadelphia's
10 portion of these taxes amounts to
11 \$78.1 million a year.

12 I am here today to
13 support the 76ers Arena Project. We
14 are fortunate to have a private
15 investor who is willing to put up
16 \$1.3 billion into an area of Center
17 City that need new development.
18 Many hotels that are located around
19 where we sit today will oftentimes
20 recommend a guest who want to visit
21 our historic assets, such as the
22 Liberty Bell, Independence Hall to
23 either use Uber or a taxi cab driver
24 to spare them of the unsavory area

1 that currently surrounds Market
2 East.

3 I think we're off to a
4 great start with the recent
5 developments that have taken place a
6 few blocks from here next to the
7 Loews Hotel, the Canopy -- the
8 Canopy by Hilton. We're off to a
9 very good start. Now, we need to
10 finish the job. I have -- I have
11 seen 8th and Market sit empty for 30
12 years when Disney Quest pulled out.
13 When that happened in, I think 1994,
14 we all assumed that area would be
15 developed.

16 Today, it's -- it's a
17 surface lot. We deserve better. We
18 deserve better as a city for our
19 residents, for our visitors, and for
20 the overall, general feel of Center
21 City.

22 So with that, it also --
23 I think the way we see this arena,
24 which is within walking distance of

1 the majority of our 14,500 hotel
2 rooms in Center City, it's another
3 entertainment option for our guests.
4 It's a also -- it could also be an
5 option for a large event, such as
6 when we hosted the DNC in 2016.
7 They could use that arena and it
8 would be closer to the hotel rooms
9 that would surround the area. So
10 for those reasons, we, as an
11 association, support the arena.

12 MR. LEVY: Good
13 afternoon. My name is Paul Levy.
14 I'm Chair of the Board of the Center
15 City District. Council President,
16 members of Council, thank you very
17 much for this opportunity to comment
18 on the proposed 76ers arena.

19 I want to start at the
20 outset to say that the Center City
21 District has no statutory authority
22 to be in favor or opposed to any
23 development that may be proposed
24 within the boundaries of the CCD,

1 nor do we have approval rights over
2 any real estate projects within the
3 CCD. That is the responsibility of
4 this City Council and this mayor.

5 Further, the CCD is the
6 business improvement district that
7 provides services to all properties
8 within the boundaries of our
9 district, and is not a registered
10 community organization authorized to
11 comment in favor or against proposed
12 developments. But I am often asked
13 to comment on how a proposed
14 project, if approved, could impact
15 the business and pedestrian
16 vitality, the safety and the
17 assessed value of the balance of the
18 CCD, and how the city and the
19 developer might enhance its
20 strengths and reduce any inverse --
21 adverse impacts on the surrounding
22 area.

23 Let me start by saying,
24 as others have, that Market Street

1 East from 6th to City Hall, ought to
2 be the prime hospitality corridor in
3 the city linking Independence Mall,
4 the Convention Center, Convention
5 hotels to City Hall, the Parkway,
6 and the Avenue of the Arts. And we
7 need to be working now to get this
8 street ready for 2026. But having
9 led the CCD for more than 30 years,
10 and having worked with many
11 developers and five mayoral
12 administrations on a range of
13 projects, I am deeply disappointed
14 and concerned about the current
15 state of Market East.

16 Let me list some
17 liabilities and significant gaps in
18 the fabric of the pedestrian
19 experience. Echoing something Ed
20 just said, the south side of the 800
21 block of Market Street has been a
22 surface parking lot since Gimbels
23 was demolished to move into The
24 Gallery in 1977.

1 The Heirloom Market at
2 801 Market Street just announced its
3 closing for lack of customers at the
4 same time as 18 new supermarkets
5 have opened elsewhere in Center City
6 since 2000, bringing our total
7 number to 25. The rest of Center
8 City is thriving, a market cannot
9 make it on Market East. Much of the
10 retail on the south side of, in
11 fact, all of the retail on the south
12 side of the 9th and 10th block of
13 Market East is currently boarded up.

14 The Marriott Hotel does
15 not want to open their doors on
16 Market Street for safety and public
17 behavior reasons. The northwest
18 corner of 13th and Market has been a
19 surface parking lot since 1982. The
20 Wanamaker Building right next to us
21 here has been taken back by its
22 lender and the fate of the Macy's
23 department store is very uncertain.
24 Such is the state of our prime

1 hospitality corridor.

2 Our successful avenues in
3 Center City are not single use
4 streets, but ones that mix offices,
5 hotels, apartments with cultural and
6 entertainment venues. Adding a
7 sports venue on this street with
8 18,500 seats that can also
9 accommodate concerts, conventions,
10 and religious gatherings at least
11 150 evenings a year can have the
12 same positive impact as The Flower
13 Show, auto show and boat show that
14 draws as many as 25,000 people to
15 the same area, causing them, as Rob
16 said, to walk past other retail
17 restaurants and occupy hotel rooms.

18 Obviously, traffic
19 congestion is a real issue that
20 needs to be addressed through
21 effective parking management, as Rob
22 indicated, and by strong promotion
23 of SEPTA and PATCO. So too -- so,
24 too, there will be a need for

1 additional cleaning and public
2 safety surfaces.

3 Even when there are no
4 games or concerts, it is my
5 understanding that the ground floor
6 of the arena will have retail and
7 food establishments that will be
8 open to the public 365 days a year.

9 Residents and visitors
10 will come to buy sports gear even
11 when there are no games, but also to
12 buy food and clothing just as they
13 do in other portions of the Fashion
14 District. Even more through strong
15 graphics and signage, SEPTA should
16 be and can be given a prominent
17 signer gateway at 10th and Market.
18 It is invisible now, and we need to
19 signify it there at 10th and Market
20 Street.

21 My understanding as well
22 is that the developers of this
23 proposed arena, a \$1.3 billion
24 arena, also have site control and

1 plans for building residential
2 towers across the street on the
3 vacant 10, 100 block, one, where
4 there are now only one-story
5 structures.

6 It would be very helpful
7 to do that sooner rather than what
8 was the proposed tower, which would
9 not have been able to be built on
10 top of the arena until 2031. So we
11 have the opportunity for two
12 residential towers immediately
13 across the street with the same
14 pattern and success that national
15 enjoyed. Would somebody with my
16 hair color want to live across the
17 street from the arena? Definitely
18 not. But for young singles, this
19 will be the place to be and live
20 with entertainment.

21 Chinatown needs to be
22 protected. We can learn from San
23 Francisco that prevented speculation
24 when their adjacent office district

1 was booming in the 1980s. They
2 placed height limits over Chinatown
3 and introduced historic preservation
4 controls. And it is one and remains
5 the most thriving Chinatown
6 nationally. Many other economic
7 development programs have been
8 proposed by others, and as I suggest
9 we need a strong parking management.
10 I will end here.

11 Finally, this project
12 should not be looked at in isolation
13 or thought of as a one-off. A year
14 ago, CCD released a plan for the
15 enhancement of Market East, which
16 can be found on our website. We
17 strongly recommend that if you
18 decide to approve this project, the
19 city should develop a master plan
20 for improvements for the entire
21 hospitality card or from
22 Independence Hall to City Hall, so
23 new additional development can fill
24 in the remaining gaps.

1 Could there be many
2 positive benefits if a new Sixers
3 Arena were to be built in South
4 Philadelphia? Absolutely. But that
5 is my -- not my decision to make.
6 I only want to offer thoughts on
7 what else could happen and should
8 happen if you decide to place it on
9 Market East in CCD. Thank you.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

11 JOHNSON: Thank you. The Chair --
12 the Chair recognizes Councilmember
13 Nina Ahmad.

14 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD:

15 Thank you Council President. I have
16 a question for the panel, but
17 particularly for the person from the
18 Pension Fund. As you've heard, I
19 don't know, and I heard you're all
20 following the testimony carefully.
21 You heard about the SEPTA issue,
22 that there is really -- SEPTA
23 doesn't have the ability to do
24 anything about all this additional

1 work that will be needed in order
2 for this to be a successful project.

3 Particularly, because
4 traffic is one of the biggest
5 concerns of everybody who lives in
6 and or around this proposed project.
7 So I just wonder if people, you
8 know, organization and entities who
9 have resources are willing to
10 participate in looking at how to
11 make these -- how to make SEPTA
12 viable in terms of doing this
13 project. Because remember, this
14 whole project hinges on 40% of the
15 people coming to the arena, taking
16 the train -- taking public
17 transport. And if you don't have
18 it, don't have the ability to give
19 it, then it doesn't work.

20 So I just wondered if
21 there's, you know, private equity
22 here that could be participants in
23 this or how we are going to elevate
24 -- alleviate this issue around SEPTA

1 because without that, I don't see
2 how this is happening. Thank you.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKER KILLINGER:

4 So I would agree that SEPTA is key
5 to the successful -- the success of
6 SEPTA is key to this proposal, and
7 it's a rare opportunity to really
8 push this city onto the public
9 transportation system. Whether or
10 not our pension fund that is a
11 decision that is made many, many
12 layers beyond my capability and
13 authority.

14 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: So
15 I realize that, that's why I am
16 putting it out in the public comment
17 to say that everybody needs to take
18 a piece of this, because they're all
19 going to benefit from this, right?
20 So those who are going to be, you
21 know, getting the upside of this is
22 who I'm asking, what their role is
23 going to be?

24 The city -- one of the

1 reasons why the city is so insistent
2 on this, from the Mayor's
3 perspective, we have a fiscal cliff
4 coming. We need to have revenue.
5 We understand that we don't have
6 alternatives that are properly
7 organized or anything that resembles
8 this offer. So if everybody's going
9 to make so much on the plus side,
10 what is their skin in the game is
11 what I'm really asking. How can we
12 change that?

13 I mean, the city has
14 nothing more to give, right? So,
15 I've also asked for more documents
16 to actually see that the city does
17 not -- is not left holding the bag
18 in certain situations. But I want
19 to know everybody who's going to
20 benefit from this, because that's
21 what I'm hearing. What is your skin
22 in the game from all of you, not
23 just you, everybody who has told us
24 this is a really great thing and we

1 can't really proceed unless these
2 safeguards are in place.

3 So this is a -- I'm not
4 asking you to answer that question
5 now, I'm just putting this out there
6 that having skin in the game is
7 really important and I would love to
8 see where all -- where that -- what
9 that looks like in order for things
10 to proceed.

11 PUBLIC SPEAKER KILLINGER:

12 Yeah. I mean, I would just argue
13 that we have a billion dollars
14 invested, which would be our, you
15 know, current skin in the game.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON: Thank you very much. The
18 Chair recognizes Councilmember
19 Phillips.

20 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

21 It gets -- I just want to say thank
22 you so much for coming out today.
23 Your reflections have been helpful
24 in this discussion, particularly,

1 Mr. Zuritsky, thank you so much for
2 -- because a lot of people have been
3 really concerned about parking and
4 the idea of walking across Steak 48,
5 that actually is good for -- for
6 business and so forth, which is not
7 too far from the arena, so I thought
8 that was great.

9 But I did have a quick
10 question, for Paul. Paul, you've
11 been doing this for a long time.
12 You have been trying to build Market
13 East in a sustainable way for a long
14 time. Can you just take
15 Philadelphia through the history of
16 development projects that have been
17 proposed for the Fashion District
18 that have -- were almost successful,
19 were successful, just ideas that
20 just never came into fruition and
21 were on a, you know, were on the
22 verge of potentially having an idea
23 come finally, coming to fruition.

24 But what have you seen,

1 over the years, has been proposed in
2 that area and why -- and why -- why
3 they haven't been successful? Why
4 didn't they go through?

5 MR. LEVY: You know, the
6 original 1970s vision for Market
7 East was almost a 100% retail
8 district. So we built The Gallery;
9 first, Gallery 1 and then built
10 Gallery 2. There were only a
11 handful of office buildings on the
12 street and almost all one-story
13 retail.

14 I think we made a very
15 important strategic decision in the
16 80s when we built the Convention
17 Center, because that suddenly made
18 it possible for the Loews to become
19 -- or actually what was PSFS, to
20 become the Loews Hotel, for the new
21 Marriott to be built. So we began
22 to diversify the street.

23 There was an attempt, as
24 some people may remember, to put a

1 casino at 8th and Market Street.
2 That went no place. Prior to that,
3 there was a plan to put Disney
4 Quest. That went no place, as well.
5 So those are two failed
6 developments.

7 What I think is really
8 important about the project that Dan
9 Kellinger described, is for the
10 first time someone brought not only
11 residential and two really high
12 quality residential towers, but
13 ground floor retail and now mixed
14 with a medical, they're moving the
15 pattern where we need to be moving
16 towards mixed use.

17 We can't rely on just
18 office buildings in the office
19 district, we need to mix in hotel
20 and residential. We can have the
21 former vision of retail only like it
22 was some suburban shopping center.
23 So what I think has been positive on
24 Market East is the mix of retail and

1 hotel and residential, but there are
2 still a lot of real estate there.

3 And so I see the arena as
4 bringing, you know, not just
5 basketball, but conventions can be
6 in that space, concerts can be in
7 that space, but then they have
8 already proposed to do two
9 residential towers as across the
10 street. The more we do a live,
11 work, play downtown, the more
12 successful we will be. The simple
13 answer is single use office
14 districts -- single use retail
15 districts are a formula for failure.
16 We need to diversify. More mixed
17 use is the key to the future.

18 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

19 Thank you, Paul. Just --
20 and just a quick question for Rob.
21 Rob, if you -- if you don't mind,
22 can you talk about your corporation
23 and its plans to build more parking
24 in Center City as a result of this?

1 Do you have any plans for that?

2 PUBLIC SPEAKER ZURITSKY:

3 No.

4 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

5 Not yet. Okay.

6 PUBLIC SPEAKER ZURITSKY:

7 Can you hear me?

8 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

9 Okay.

10 PUBLIC SPEAKER ZURITSKY:

11 No. I don't think any more parking

12 is -- in that neighborhood there is

13 adequate parking. There is an --

14 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

15 Thank you.

16 PUBLIC SPEAKER ZURITSKY:

17 -- abundance of parking. Our

18 developments -- you know, we had a

19 couple developments. One in

20 Chinatown was going to be

21 residential with some retail and a

22 little bit of parking. That's

23 really what I think it's going to be

24 is residential. That's what we were

1 focused on, is all residential in
2 that neighborhood.

3 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

4 Thank you. Thank you.

5 Thank you everyone on the panel.

6 Thank you. Thank you, Council

7 President.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: Thank you very much. The
10 chair recognized Councilmember Jim
11 Harrity.

12 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

13 Thank you, Council President. Let's
14 try this again. I got two
15 questions. One for Ed Grose and one
16 for Mr. Zuritsky. Ed, can you tell
17 us how much business the 76ers arena
18 will stir up in the hotel industry
19 in Philadelphia and how much tax
20 revenue those hotels will --

21 MR. GROSE: I don't know
22 an accurate answer to that. I'm
23 looking, that's why I geared my
24 testimony towards what it will do

1 for the city. I do know that for
2 every \$100 dollars spent on a hotel
3 room, there's about 17% of that. So
4 \$17 out of every \$100 dollars in
5 room rate comes back to the city in
6 some way. That's not even -- and
7 that's not even in considering the
8 money spent once the person leaves
9 the hotel room.

10 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

11 That's great.

12 MR. GROSE: And it's also
13 going back to, I could easily see
14 another political convention
15 occupying the space. I could see --
16 I did not think of religious groups,
17 but there's all kinds of other uses
18 that could be used that I have no
19 way of knowing what that'll amount
20 to in the future.

21 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

22 Okay. And Mr. Zuritsky,
23 what type of impact will this
24 project have on parking industry,

1 particularly in the area of
2 Chinatown and the surrounding areas?
3 And how much revenue do you estimate
4 will come from this for parking
5 industry?

6 PUBLIC SPEAKER ZURITSKY:
7 That's an interesting question. I
8 -- the amount of -- this one?

9 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
10 Speak into the mic.

11 PUBLIC SPEAKER ZURITSKY:
12 Oh, hello. I don't think that
13 works. Hello? I'm pretty loud.
14 I'm pretty loud though. Okay. Try
15 it again.

16 PUBLIC SPEAKER ZURITSKY:
17 I don't think there's going to be --
18 there's already -- they're already
19 parking -- there's already parking
20 business that's out in -- and this
21 is going to be a smaller arena. So
22 there's about 5,000 fewer, I think
23 seats. So I agree with the --with
24 their estimates that public

1 transportation will be boosted from
2 this dramatically.

3 I feel it's so easy to
4 get in and out. And I think their
5 estimates of 3000 to 3,500 cars
6 coming to -- I think that makes
7 sense too. So it's not going to
8 change the -- it's going to maybe
9 reduce the demand because there's
10 fewer seats.

11 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
12 Right.

13 PUBLIC SPEAKER ZURITSKY:
14 I would -- I would say Paul, when
15 the convention center first opened
16 and the car show was really cooking,
17 we would do 60,000 people on a
18 Saturday. Now, that was spread out
19 over a, you know, 10-hour period.

20 But this area of town has
21 a dramatic amount of parking and
22 most of it is available, especially
23 in the evenings when most of the,
24 you know, when most of the events

1 are. So I think this is a very easy
2 thing to manage and the technology
3 will enable us to disperse this.
4 And I think this will be very good
5 for the surrounding businesses by
6 doing it.

7 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

8 Yeah. So, I mean, it's
9 no secret that the parking lot
10 people have been taking some hits
11 over the last couple years. Do you
12 think this will help them out a
13 little bit? The added people coming
14 in there?

15 PUBLIC SPEAKER ZURITSKY:

16 Absolutely. Having another
17 generator, the Convention Center is
18 a tremendous draw for the parking
19 industry, and we've, you know,
20 handled that successfully for 25
21 years, as long as the Convention
22 Center's been open. This is much
23 smaller than the Convention Center
24 and this is very manageable. It

1 will be good for -- yes, the parking
2 industry absolutely benefits from
3 this.

4 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
5 Thank you. I -- no more questions.
6 Thank you, Council President.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
8 JOHNSON: Thank you. The chair
9 acknowledges councilmember Rue
10 Landau.

11 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
12 Thank you, Council
13 President. My question is for Dan
14 and Paul, if possible. Dan, I think
15 I've met you before and told you
16 that I love the development that you
17 did on 11th and 12th whatever that
18 street was, at alley. I spent a lot
19 of my professional career going to
20 municipal court down there, and it
21 was not a pretty site.

22 So I love what you did.
23 I love the hotel. I think it's been
24 transformative for the area, but my

1 question to you too, it is
2 beautiful, it is vibrant, it is
3 full, there are people, why has it
4 not triggered more change and more
5 development both on Chestnut Street,
6 just south of it, and also
7 potentially on Market Street?

8 I've spent a lot of time
9 on Market Street as well. I've --
10 personally, I'm not happy that
11 Macy's doesn't open their front
12 door. I'd love to go through their
13 front door. I'd love for any of
14 those businesses or somebody else to
15 have been taking a chance on some of
16 those businesses on Market Street.
17 And I think it does take a couple of
18 courageous people and or a
19 development like yours to be an
20 anchor. I'm curious as to why you
21 think that didn't spur more?

22 PUBLIC SPEAKER KILLINGER:
23 Yeah, I think it's a good question.
24 I think you would have to look at it

1 through the different uses in our --
2 we have residential, we have hotel,
3 we have office. I do think that the
4 residential on Market Street,
5 although our front doors aren't on
6 Market Street, they're on Ludlow
7 Street, which is the alley behind,
8 has been a bit of a catalyst for
9 more residential, primarily between
10 our project and sort of 13th and
11 Sansom. There's three or four new
12 residential buildings along 12th
13 Street and along Walnut Street in
14 that area. So I would -- do think
15 that has inspired residential.

16 I think that the retail's
17 a challenge. We did have some
18 momentum prior to the pandemic, and
19 when the Fashion District opened, it
20 was starting to build. But since
21 the pandemic we've closed, we've
22 lost Wawa, we've lost District Taco.

23 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: I
24 know.

1 PUBLIC SPEAKER KILLINGER:

2 We've lost. So like, it's a
3 struggle. And now we're trying to
4 fill our remaining spaces, and
5 that's the one piece that's been
6 slow for us. The hotel has
7 stabilized and been somewhat
8 successful but it could certainly
9 use another a sort of shot in the
10 arm from like three or four
11 different investments along Market
12 Street for sure.

13 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

14 Thank you.

15 PUBLIC SPEAKER LEVY:

16 Dan, when did you complete the
17 second tower?

18 PUBLIC SPEAKER KILLINGER:

19 2018 and '19 were the first two
20 residential buildings. And about --

21 MR. LEVY: Right. And
22 they complete the second --

23 PUBLIC SPEAKER KILLINGER:

24 -- 95% full.

1 MR. LEVY: Right. So, to
2 partially answer your question,
3 councilwoman, the success of those
4 two towers before PREIT lost control
5 of the Fashion District, they bought
6 the properties across the street,
7 which are third of the East. They
8 were planning to do two residential
9 towers there. That momentum was
10 happening, and then we all know what
11 happened with the pandemic. It was
12 a huge setback.

13 We have rebounded from
14 that in terms of job growth and the
15 plans that the Sixers have announced
16 for residential towers on the south
17 side --

18 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
19 Yes.

20 MR. LEVY: -- are simply
21 picking up on what PREIT was going
22 to do when they owned them. So I
23 think that momentum was building, I
24 think certainly Mark can speak to

1 the number of properties they were
2 trying to acquire on Chestnut
3 Street. It was beginning to ripple
4 out. We had this huge disruption
5 that we're recovering from, and I
6 think this can get that process
7 going again.

8 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

9 That's helpful. So you're saying
10 that there was a plan to start
11 reaching down to Chestnut Street,
12 but the pandemic was the barrier to
13 getting that done?

14 MR. LEVY: Well, let me
15 -- let me just give Dan and his team
16 enormous credit for what they did,
17 because so much of the criticism of
18 the Fashion District and other
19 projects is that they created a wall
20 and a corridor. And what National
21 did is create a set of walkways
22 through to connect Market Street to
23 Chestnut Street. And that prompted,
24 Brickstone acquired more properties

1 on that street, and it was beginning
2 to filter out.

3 I think there's a chance
4 still, depending on what the parking
5 authority does with 10th and Ludlow,
6 that if those two towers go forward
7 on the block, that PREIT had
8 controlled, you could get that
9 connectivity. And my read of the
10 Sixers plan is a continuous walkway
11 from Market Street through to
12 Filbert and across all the way to
13 Arch creating within the building a
14 corridor. Overcoming the North
15 South barriers is as important and
16 objective as reestablishing the
17 East-West connection. That should
18 be our broad development principles
19 for this street.

20 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

21 Thank you.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

23 JOHNSON:

24 Thank you. The chair

1 recognizes Councilmember Jamie
2 Gauthier.

3 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

4 Thank you, Council
5 President. Good afternoon to all of
6 you. Thank you for your testimony
7 and for your work in the city. My
8 question is for Paul. I was
9 intrigued to hear you talk about the
10 visioning that you've done for
11 Market East, and I was also very
12 pleased to hear you make a strong
13 statement that we have to protect
14 Chinatown and to bring up some best
15 practices from San Francisco.

16 MR. LEVY: Sure.

17 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

18 Given that, I wanted to
19 ask, what do you think about the
20 wisdom of the city's plan strategy
21 to do a master plan after the
22 approval of this or after the
23 desired approval of this project,
24 given how large the project is, and

1 given that the project does pose the
2 risk of displacement as noted in the
3 city's own impact study?

4 And then secondly, what,
5 since you did bring up that we need
6 to protect Chinatown, if you've had
7 an opportunity to look at the
8 community benefits agreement, what's
9 your opinion on the CBA and its
10 effectiveness in mitigating some of
11 the less desirable impacts on the
12 surrounding neighborhoods?

13 MR. LEVY: So you've
14 asked me a whole lot of questions in
15 there.

16 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
17 I can go over them again, if
18 necessary.

19 MR. LEVY: No, no, no.
20 That's fair. That's perfect.
21 Number one, obviously Chinatown is
22 an absolutely unique destination
23 place of resonance and place of
24 business in this city that

1 absolutely needs to be preserved and
2 enhanced.

3 And as you may know,
4 we're working on a next phase of the
5 rail park and the stitch can expend.
6 That needs to be knitted back
7 together. So we need to create more
8 room for Chinatown to grow. I mean,
9 there are lots of opportunities
10 along Vine Street for more
11 development there, I think.

12 So one is, we need to get
13 out of this, either or thinking.
14 The city can be a place of many,
15 many successful nodes. And I
16 absolutely think we can do a lot to
17 preserve and enhance Chinatown. I
18 don't want to be presumptuous, but
19 we released a plan a year ago for
20 Market East, which is a
21 redevelopment plan for the street
22 and we did it in advance of these
23 hearings.

24 Yes, the city needs to do

1 something official, but I urge you
2 to look at that. I'll give you a
3 copy of our testimony with a link to
4 our website because it urges this
5 thinking of comprehensive east,
6 west, north, south thinking, which I
7 don't think anybody in the city will
8 disagree with.

9 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

10 Yeah.

11 MR. LEVY: But I don't
12 think -- I don't think we're behind
13 the ball. I think we -- what -- we
14 should be moving now and frankly, we
15 need to be doing stuff yesterday to
16 be ready for 2026. There's things
17 that need to happen right now.

18 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

19 Absolutely. I think my
20 question is, if I'm understanding it
21 correctly, the administration has
22 said that they, you know, have
23 included some funding in the -- in
24 the CBA or that the Sixers will

1 include funding in the CBA to see a
2 master planning effort for Market
3 East and Chinatown.

4 I agree with you that
5 there can -- we should be thinking
6 of downtown comprehensively. There
7 can be many successful nodes in the
8 city. But given, you know, your
9 experience with planning and urban
10 design, I think I'm asking you with
11 a project of this scale that does
12 pose displacement risk.

13 Do you think it's wise to
14 say we're going to go forward with
15 the project before we go forward
16 with the planning?

17 MR. LEVY: As I said, I
18 think we've outlined a preliminary
19 planning framework. I think the
20 basics are there. What we really
21 need are the mechanisms. And by that
22 I mean what are the additional
23 sources of revenue to help cause
24 Market East to continue to improve.

1 Council President, as you
2 and I were talking beforehand, what
3 are the mechanisms for enhancing
4 Chinatown? We need zoning, we need
5 financing, mechanism. The vision is
6 the easy part, frankly. And I don't
7 mean to say we don't have need a lot
8 of community engagement. We need a
9 knit to city back together and fill
10 in these gaps. But I think we need
11 to be focusing on how do we do it?
12 What are the financing mechanisms?
13 That's where I would focus.

14 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
15 Would you answer some of those
16 questions?

17 PUBLIC SPEAKER ZURITSKY:
18 Could I answer?

19 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
20 Sure.

21 PUBLIC SPEAKER ZURITSKY:
22 Please? So, you know, we -- our
23 company has done development in
24 Chinatown and partnered with

1 Chinatown Development Corporation to
2 redevelop 9th and Vine to Race, that
3 block. And like, as I -- as I
4 mentioned in our testimony, we have
5 a lot of inventory to do affordable
6 housing for Chinatown.

7 And -- so I don't -- the
8 fact that there's seven years until
9 this is going to actually going to
10 be opened, I think there is time
11 over the next year or two to work on
12 things that Chinatown needs and make
13 progress and build some things that
14 they -- that they really want. I
15 think now is -- I don't -- I don't
16 think it's too late to start the
17 planning process and working on
18 these projects.

19 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

20 Thank you. And then my
21 second question, since Paul brought
22 up San Francisco and the need to
23 protect Chinatown, I did want to
24 hear your opinion if you looked at

1 it on the CBA and do you think that
2 it will be an effective tool towards
3 that end based on what you've seen?

4 PUBLIC SPEAKER KILLINGER:
5 I think that was you.

6 MR. LEVY: Look, I am not
7 here to comment on business
8 relationships between the city and
9 Chinatown on the CBA. Okay?

10 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
11 I don't think I'm asking you to talk
12 about the relationship --

13 MR. LEVY: I thought you
14 asked me to comment. Maybe
15 misunderstood your question.

16 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
17 Oh, I don't think -- I'm not asking
18 for your opinion between -- on the
19 relationship between the city and
20 the Sixers. I'm asking if you've
21 looked at the CBA and if you think
22 that it could be an effective tool
23 towards anti-displacement.

24 MR. LEVY: No. But to

1 me, the bigger tool, in my judgment,
2 I'm not in any way -- I have not
3 read the CBA. I want to be clear on
4 that. But what I learned in looking
5 at San Francisco is zoning is the
6 most powerful tool we have.

7 If the fear is that by
8 building an arena on Market East,
9 that it will create all this
10 speculative buying in Chinatown and
11 destruction and displacement, if you
12 simply historically certify those
13 properties and put current height
14 controls, you completely remove the
15 incentive for any speculative
16 buying. That's what protected
17 Chinatown in San Francisco. There
18 are many other tools necessary.

19 I just want to urge the
20 look at what the zoning powers of
21 this city are, which I think is the
22 most powerful tool to protect
23 Chinatown as it is today. And as
24 Rob said, the number of surface

1 parking lots that could become
2 housing that have been sitting
3 vacant for a long time along Vine
4 Street, there are huge opportunities
5 for Chinatown to grow.

6 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

7 Thank you. Thank you,
8 Council President.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON:

11 Thank you very much.

12 This is a point of information.
13 Councilman Squilla, the author of
14 the legislation, I think you
15 introduced several different bills
16 regarding to the preservation of
17 Chinatown regarding zoning. Can you
18 just clarify for the record?

19 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:

20 Thank you, Mr. President. Yes. And
21 I want to thank Paul also because I
22 did reach out to Paul when we were
23 looking at some of our legislation
24 for our Chinatown cultural overlay.

1 And we looked at some of the things
2 that Paul had mentioned in San
3 Francisco and some other ideas
4 throughout the country of protecting
5 cultural hub in those communities.

6 So the overlay that we
7 have created, as we said earlier in
8 one of the testimonies, was to an
9 inclusionary zoning, a height limit
10 of 65 feet. And a mass and bulking
11 ordinance for controlling of small
12 businesses, no more than 3,000
13 square feet, that would require a
14 variance.

15 And the third was the
16 ability to limit some of the uses as
17 some of the adult uses nightclubs,
18 so forth and so on. So people don't
19 come and speculate and put those
20 type of businesses in a cultural
21 Chinatown that would normally not
22 have it. The Chinatown does have
23 restaurants and bars in there
24 already.

1 But the last thing was
2 that we are still working on that
3 legislation is franchises where the
4 city is looking at the ability to
5 limit if you have five or more
6 franchises that would also trigger a
7 variance. That is something, too,
8 that we are also looking at to
9 sustain the cultural makeup of
10 Chinatown where you can't have -- I
11 don't want to name a franchise
12 because if I do it, they'll say,
13 why'd you pick them out?

14 But some franchises that,
15 you know, that comes in here and
16 they have at least five, that would
17 automatically trigger variance,
18 would send them to the RCO and to
19 the zoning board and through Council
20 for support.

21 So some of those things
22 that we have been talking to and
23 working with Chinatown to come up
24 with are in our cultural overlay.

1 Also, mentioned is the TIF that
2 we're still working on, which would
3 -- if there is an increase in value
4 in assessments, if the values of
5 properties are going to be increased
6 because of this development, and now
7 the properties of value is going to
8 be more, the businesses are -- more
9 businesses want to come in and take
10 over for small businesses.

11 The TIF would then be
12 able to capture that increase, but
13 then be able to use it in that
14 community to offset the increase
15 assessed values of those properties.

16 So that is something else
17 that we are still working on with
18 the law department and the City of
19 Philadelphia and the Chinatown
20 community who seems very much
21 supportive of something like that.

22 And so they were some of
23 the things that we put in as far as
24 zoning is concerned so far in

1 legislation. And I believe too,
2 this overlay, and the reason why
3 it's not part of these conversations
4 here is because I believe that
5 Chinatown needs to be protected
6 anyway, and that will be on its own
7 track, in case this doesn't move
8 forward, that will still be put in
9 place for future protections.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

11 JOHNSON:

12 Chair recognizes
13 Councilmember Jamie Gauthier for a
14 very brief follow up.

15 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

16 Very brief, I promise. I
17 just wanted to make it crystal clear
18 that my questions were not a knock
19 on Councilmember Squilla's efforts.
20 I have great admiration for how much
21 work he's been putting in on this.
22 It was more asking for an opinion on
23 the master -- sequencing of the
24 master planning and the CBA.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON:

3 Thank you very much,
4 Councilmember Jamie Gauthier.
5 Councilmember Jeffrey Young.

6 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:

7 Thank you, Mr. President. And good
8 afternoon everyone. Just a question
9 for anyone on the panel. For me --
10 press a comment first, I think it's
11 clear that a mixed use option along
12 East Market is the best, you know,
13 option for our city.

14 It's been clear that I
15 have a keen interest in what happens
16 on Market Street in our commercial
17 corridors. I've held hearings on
18 it. It is something that's very
19 important to me to make sure that
20 our city continues to grow. But
21 given that this particular proposal
22 could cause -- no, that could cause,
23 I think it will cause displacement
24 and other things.

1 Are there other viable
2 development opportunities at this
3 site that could produce new revenue
4 for the city with more everyday use
5 that puts more eyes on the streets
6 to make our streets safer, to put
7 more lighting on the streets, et
8 cetera?

9 Like has there been -- I
10 guess it's probably more for Center
11 City District than anyone else, but
12 has there been any other options
13 presented that would -- that would
14 still be able to, you know, that
15 would still be a new development
16 that would still be built union,
17 right, and still have the
18 opportunity, so, to provide a new
19 revenue for the city?

20 MR. LEVY: Not an easy
21 question to answer, but I mean,
22 let's just think about the upper
23 floors of the Fashion District. We
24 all used to think that movie

1 theaters was the guaranteed source
2 of driving business and having
3 people come in. How many people are
4 watching movies here and all sorts
5 of digital technology? The movie
6 theater industry is contracting.
7 That would've been an easy answer.
8 Let's have movie theaters upstairs.

9 We did that and go to
10 most movie theaters today and are
11 not full unless it's something
12 gigantic. You go -- you go, okay,
13 well, my wife's a movie critic, she
14 drags me. I have to go. But --

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON: So I blame Netflix for
17 that.

18 MR. LEVY: I'm sorry, I
19 missed that.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

21 JOHNSON: Netflix.

22 MR. LEVY: Oh, yeah. No.
23 And look, technology has changed,
24 right? And it's like, how many of

1 us buy the newspaper for news any
2 longer? So we have tried many
3 things. Technology has really
4 evolved. Sports is one of those
5 things like conventions that brings
6 people in person together, right? I
7 think it's a very powerful use to
8 bring people together. We tried
9 gaming on the street; that did not
10 succeed, right? We tried Disney.

11 We've had a lot of
12 efforts on the street. But to me
13 the mixture of residential, the
14 mixture of office, the mixture of
15 hotels, sports is just one use.
16 It's not a panacea. It's not the
17 solution to this street,
18 strengthening Chinatown
19 strengthening hotels, strengthening
20 residential.

21 We're doing that
22 elsewhere in Center City, right?
23 We're doing that very well. We're a
24 leader in converting vacant office

1 buildings to residential and hotels.
2 So it's all of the above. There's
3 not one solution to what we need to
4 do today.

5 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: And
6 thank you for that. And again,
7 given that you said this, it's not
8 one solution. And I think that for
9 us as a city, we've only been given
10 one solution to look at. And I
11 think that is what my concern is.

12 I want to see what other
13 options are out there to produce,
14 you know, new revenue for the city.
15 Not, you know, this and I'm not -- I
16 want to say this. How can I say
17 this? I'm not anti-arena at this
18 site. I want to make sure that
19 whatever happens here, if it does
20 happen, is good for the city, right?
21 It's in the best interest of the
22 city.

23 And if there are other
24 alternatives that have less of an

1 impact, right, on communities but
2 still are able to produce new
3 revenue, produce new jobs, I think
4 that is what we should be taking a
5 look at, as well, alongside whatever
6 else proposals have been there.

7 But I think just having
8 this put in front of us without a
9 plan for the entire East Market
10 area, I think we're putting -- what
11 is it? The cart before the horse.
12 I think that's what we're doing
13 here. Thank you, Mr. President.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.
16 There are no other questions and
17 comments from members of the
18 committee. I want to thank all of
19 you for taking time and joining us
20 today and thank you for your
21 testimony. Thank you very much.

22 Let's keep rocking and
23 rolling. Will the clerk please call
24 the next panel, please?

1 CHIEF CLERK: Our next
2 panel, could Mark Merlini. Dan
3 Killinger -- oh, no, I'm sorry.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

5 JOHNSON: Melvin Hairston --

6 CHIEF CLERK: Panel 3.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Munira Edens.

9 CHIEF CLERK: Okay.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

11 JOHNSON: Jeremy Wolin and Eli
12 Storch. Please join us up at these,
13 please. Just please state your name
14 for the record and you can begin.

15 MS. EDENS: Hello,
16 Council President Johnson, Majority
17 Leader Gilmore Richardson and the
18 rest of the City Council. My name
19 is Munira Edens, and I'm an
20 organizer with the Philly Black
21 Worker Project. We are a worker
22 center that fights for marginalized
23 Black workers. I'm not only
24 representing the thousands of Black

1 workers here in the city, but also
2 as part of Black Philly for
3 Chinatown.

4 I was born and raised
5 here in the city and have lived in
6 many parts, mostly North Philly and
7 I know that every job is not a good
8 job. Many temp workers had their
9 labor exploited behind bars, then
10 come home where they're told to take
11 whatever kinds of jobs they can get
12 and get funneled into low quality
13 temporary jobs with no benefits and
14 no upward mobility facing further
15 exploitation. And who benefits from
16 this exploitation? Wealthy
17 corporations and billionaires like
18 the ones behind the 76ers place.

19 These billionaires have
20 had the city unaffordable and also
21 create and maintain the low wage
22 economy that keeps Black workers
23 poor. Supporters of the proposed 76
24 arena and Center City keep praising

1 the potential employment
2 opportunities of the project. The
3 union has already told you all that
4 concession workers are less than
5 enthusiastic about new jobs when
6 they're still fighting for living
7 wages at their current ones.

8 And we have members who
9 have been denied work at these same
10 stadiums because of their criminal
11 backgrounds and are only allowed to
12 work there through a temp agency.

13 We keep being presented
14 with these job numbers like we
15 should take whatever we can get
16 because a job is a job. But if we
17 are serious about issues of poverty
18 in our Black communities, then we
19 need to seriously interrogate the
20 quality of the jobs being proposed
21 to us.

22 Are these jobs enough to
23 take care of my family? Do I need
24 two or more jobs to supplement my

1 income because this job isn't paying
2 enough? These are real questions
3 that our members are constantly
4 wrestling with.

5 And the bigger question
6 is, based on a 76ers job creation
7 promises, will there be job
8 projections even turn into job for
9 Philadelphians? They didn't in
10 Camden. They promised hundreds of
11 jobs to the residents of Camden and
12 only produced 11.

13 The reality is the
14 majority of Black workers in the
15 city are not entrepreneurs. And
16 while we want to see more Black
17 entrepreneurs to be able to sustain
18 their families through
19 entrepreneurial paths, we must also
20 deal with the truth that is in front
21 of us.

22 Only 5.4% of businesses
23 in Philadelphia are Black owned.
24 This means the majority of Black

1 workers in this city are employees,
2 and many of them are non-union and
3 not receiving sustainable wages and
4 are often -- and often do not
5 receive benefits at all. There
6 should be many paths to prosperity
7 for all black workers who are not
8 entrepreneurs, but work just as
9 hard. This deal does not do that.

10 We heard councilmember
11 Gilmore Richardson ask about the
12 wealth generation and the ownership
13 stake that Black entrepreneurs will
14 have in this project. The answer
15 was zero. So if the goal is wealth
16 creation for black communities and
17 the generations to come, it is
18 unclear how this project supports us
19 as a city and closing the racial
20 wealth gap.

21 And this is in a city
22 where the Black median wealth is
23 \$9,000 compared to the \$160,000 for
24 white Philadelphians. Yet here we

1 are entertaining solutions that
2 create no real pathway to wealth for
3 our people. Billionaires like Josh
4 Harris, David Adelman, and David
5 Blitzer are not actually willing to
6 share the pie. And the question is,
7 will Council vote "no" on this
8 arena? Because this strategy has
9 not worked before and this isn't
10 working now.

11 People keep saying they
12 cannot afford their basic needs and
13 the -- and in the midst of what
14 they're talking about to make the
15 rich richer and keep the poor
16 poorer. This city needs more Black
17 community -- more and black
18 communities deserve more. I am so
19 sick of watching billionaires get
20 whatever they want from this city
21 while we -- while we are getting
22 thrown crumbs.

23 What does a tax agreement
24 with billionaires mean to a city

1 where our minimum wage is still at
2 \$7.25? We -- thank you. We know
3 what our communities need and we've
4 told you as Council this year after
5 year, we need fully funded worker
6 protections. We need fully funded
7 schools for our children. We need
8 fully funded public transportation.
9 The majority of our members use
10 SEPTA to get back and forth, and
11 it's trifling. We love our Sixers
12 teams, but we know that we need to
13 invest in our communities. Thank
14 you.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON: Thank you.

17 PUBLIC SPEAKER HAIRSTON:

18 I have to go after that. Good
19 afternoon, councilmember Johnson,
20 other members of Council. My name
21 is Melvin Hairston from the UC slash
22 Peoples Townhomes and I'm an
23 advocacy on housing.

24 What I'm here to talk

1 about is basically one of the
2 biggest ongoing crisis in our city
3 is affordable housing. And with --
4 and with the crisis implemented, we
5 have to have a base structure where
6 housing is protected. Nowhere in
7 this agreement or this proposal is
8 housing protected by any stretch to
9 any of our imaginations here.

10 We -- excuse me, there is
11 -- the townhomes was in a place of
12 vast resources, one of the -- one of
13 the last and formal structures of a
14 -- of a community that spent four
15 decades with children,
16 grandchildren, mothers,
17 grandmothers, single women and
18 children that were split apart from
19 their communities.

20 And I being one of those
21 people that grew up 30 years in that
22 community, had seen the struggles of
23 what's being moved out. And I --
24 and Mr. Killinger sat here and

1 talked about the work that he's
2 done. But one of the words that
3 wasn't mentioned, that he was one --
4 that his company was one of the
5 first to try to purchase the
6 Townhomes where our land stood on,
7 where our homes stood, where our
8 babies rested their heads.

9 And the upsetting thing
10 is, is that now that that land has
11 been sold and all the housing there
12 has been reduced to concrete and
13 trees and asphalt, that only 20% of
14 the land was given back to the
15 people, the -- were given back to
16 the city to help the people rebuild,
17 which it went from 70 housing
18 structures to possibly a tower of
19 apartments. That means the
20 community is being downsized.

21 Our community is being
22 downsized from living in houses all
23 their lives to being downsized to
24 apartments, which is squaring in the

1 lives -- squaring in the way people
2 are living. And it needs to be
3 pointed out that our structure on a
4 protected, affordable housing is
5 non-existent. That needs to change.
6 It needs to be something in place.
7 It needs to be a legislation in
8 place where our homes could be
9 protected.

10 Because let's look at it.

11 The community thrives through its
12 people. The city thrives through
13 its people. And if people are on
14 the streets, which is the numbers
15 and the thousands in the city, if
16 people are on the streets, how is 76
17 Place really going to help the
18 community thrive when the community
19 is struggling to find places to live
20 and low wages?

21 So how is that going to
22 allocate to paying to get a ticket
23 to see the Sixers? How is that --
24 how is any of that going to allocate

1 itself to help the people where we
2 -- this is supposed to be a business
3 that -- to helping these people.
4 You know, Council, you all members
5 are helping the people of the city.
6 Where does this help? Where does
7 this help people find housing?
8 Where does this help people try to
9 find better jobs?

10 They -- this doesn't --
11 this doesn't coexists and I mean,
12 this is this basic knowledge right
13 here that none of this coexist with
14 helping the people of this city. I
15 mean, a two -- a two to three hour
16 sports game, how does that help the
17 community of people that are
18 struggling and people being
19 displaced?

20 And I'm fitting to see
21 change, and the people that are
22 sitting here are fitting to see
23 change. And we had to start with
24 one of the biggest ongoing crisis in

1 the city to settle up. If we could
2 talk about building anything --
3 building anything to help the
4 economic structure, we got to help
5 the people first, then the economy
6 works off the people. Thank you.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Thank you. Jeremy Wolin?

9 PUBLIC SPEAKER WOLIN:

10 Thank you. Hi, my name is Jeremy
11 Wolin. I'm a PhD candidate in
12 architecture at Princeton
13 University, and I'm here to remind
14 you how much Philadelphia loses by
15 green lighting an arena in the heart
16 of Center City.

17 First, if the developers
18 we've just heard from have been so
19 responsible for building Market East
20 into the struggling street it is
21 today, why are we taking their word
22 for it? That just one more
23 development will be the catalyst we
24 need. What you also heard is that

1 Market East is physically saturated
2 and trying to fit an arena on a lot
3 that's already quite small for an
4 arena development means less work
5 for Philadelphia's builders.

6 NBA arenas built on
7 bigger lots have built grand plazas
8 and public parks. NBA arenas built
9 in new neighborhoods have built out
10 transit stops and lines that make a
11 transit system stronger, not push
12 the system like SEPTA further into a
13 death spiral. And NBA arenas built
14 in other cities have provided more
15 money for building, just affordable
16 housing alone, than the entirety of
17 the Sixers agreement.

18 Second, yes, mixed use is
19 important, but it has to be smart,
20 including a use that creates sudden
21 bursts of 18,000 people in a single
22 hour is incompatible to all the
23 other attractions that makes mixed
24 use, good mixed use.

1 And who will pay for the
2 team of traffic enforcement and
3 officers that the city's traffic
4 impact studies say are needed if we
5 are to keep 76 Place's 18,000
6 spectators safe on narrow streets
7 that the city's own design impact
8 studies say are inadequate for the
9 job?

10 Who will pay for the
11 officers needed to enforce
12 geo-fencing to accommodate even
13 out-of-date ride-share numbers? Who
14 will pay for lost spending and lost
15 wages when SEPTA's second busiest
16 transit hub periodically closes for
17 six years of construction? Who will
18 pay for the business -- lost
19 business opportunities when as the
20 city's transit -- traffic impact
21 study says the Sixers promised 40%
22 target still causes gridlock
23 throughout Center City half the
24 time.

1 Third, adding a project
2 that promised to bring thousands of
3 cars into Center City hinders every
4 positive new advancement made to
5 Center City for decades to come.
6 The first advancement to suffer will
7 be the Chinatown Stitch. The
8 Reconnecting Communities program has
9 already given Philadelphia millions
10 to repair the damage the I676
11 imparted on Philadelphia.

12 But all that construction
13 work goes to waste if as the Sixers
14 traffic study promises, thousands of
15 suburban Sixers fans gridlock Vine
16 Street regularly, a vote for 76
17 Place against is a vote against
18 repairing the scar that separates
19 North Philly from Center City.

20 Now, yesterday you heard
21 from one of my colleagues and
22 actually independent economists that
23 say there's no economic argument for
24 building an arena downtown, given

1 the vast harm an arena will impart
2 on existing businesses.

3 In response, the
4 so-called community benefits
5 agreement is an insult to your
6 constituents stuffed with free
7 tickets the Sixers wouldn't sell
8 anyway, programs they should already
9 be paying for and aid to businesses
10 that's barely a drop in downtown
11 rent showing that the Sixers simply
12 don't know what it costs to do
13 business in Center City.

14 When Inglewood,
15 California gets \$75 million for
16 affordable housing alone and San
17 Franciscans get \$27 million upfront
18 for traffic transit improvements
19 followed by \$10 million for transit
20 monitoring 30 years thereafter, the
21 50 million on the table now, it
22 needs another zero before
23 Philadelphians even give it the time
24 of day.

1 To conclude, the cost of
2 building in a dense downtown are
3 great. This is why a fully funded
4 -- fully privately funded arena is
5 really nothing more than a scam
6 designed to take away Philadelphia's
7 seat at the table. The scam lets
8 billionaires decide on their own
9 what they pay for and then leave the
10 taxpayer to pay for the rest.

11 Building at a tiny
12 constrained site like 10th and
13 Market means that while other cities
14 get grand architecture and new
15 public amenities, Philadelphia gets
16 a billboard covered box. And while
17 it might not look like much,
18 building that box in this location,
19 in the heart of Center City, comes
20 at great public cost. Thank you.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

22 JOHNSON: Thank you. Eli Storch?

23 MR. STORCH: Good

24 afternoon. Thank you for the

1 opportunity to testify today and
2 thank you for being on this panel
3 with me.

4 Good afternoon. My name
5 is Eli Storch and I chair the design
6 advocacy group, a 23-year-old
7 nonprofit with the mission of
8 advocating for design in
9 Philadelphia's built environment,
10 both in terms of quality and equity.

11 The steering committee of
12 the Design Advocacy Group has
13 opposed 76 Place since 2023. And
14 I'm here today to reaffirm that an
15 arena cannot do what needs to be
16 done on East Market. It cannot make
17 the most of the opportunities
18 presented, nor can it meet the
19 challenges posed by the site.

20 The design materials
21 presented to the public show that
22 while introducing new problems, it
23 was our opinion then, as it remains
24 now, that what Market East needs is

1 an influx of 24/7 street oriented
2 activity, which is something that
3 the proposal for 76 Place simply
4 does not, when it was proposed and
5 has not, based on the limited
6 revisions provided had achieved.

7 Much focus has been on
8 the number of days when an event
9 will occur. This is significant,
10 but so too is the fact that these
11 events be they basketball games or
12 concerts occur in the evening,
13 leaving a dead in street presence
14 facing Market Street on almost all
15 days. It's hard to imagine that the
16 limited interior retail space with
17 minimal street frontage represents
18 an upgrade on what exists presently,
19 regardless of the amount of glazing
20 on the overall mass of the building.

21 Additionally, locating
22 this proximate to the Convention
23 Center, another massive building,
24 that presents primarily inactive

1 facades, is similarly problematic.
2 Adding another single use mass, and
3 I would consider this a single use
4 building, to this area of the city,
5 no matter how many digital
6 billboards adorn it, is not a
7 compromise worth making.

8 Much can and should and
9 has and will be said about the
10 pedestrian and vehicular issues the
11 project faces, especially in light
12 of recent news on the State of
13 SEPTA, the threat to Chinatown, the
14 insufficiency of the CBA, the
15 continued lack of clarity on the
16 actual bounds program and details of
17 the development proposal. I'll
18 leave that to others.

19 Across the street, the
20 East Market project has already
21 provided a successful model of the
22 type of morning, noon, and night
23 mixed use development, as you heard
24 from the developer himself on the

1 panel before us, that this is --
2 that is what this area requires to
3 be successful with the mix of
4 restaurants and retail enlivening
5 the sidewalks including that newly
6 reinvigorated space. So, we talked
7 about connecting through from Market
8 Street to Chestnut using the
9 project's own site circulation.

10 At 76 Place, the
11 sacrifice of Filbert Street and the
12 deadened rear facade along Cuthbert
13 Street would take these blocks in
14 the opposite direction. As the
15 leaders of our city, we hope that
16 you, along with the planning
17 commission and other experts in
18 government and the private sector,
19 will develop and guide a
20 comprehensive vision for Market
21 East.

22 That has both long-term
23 family sustaining jobs as well as
24 short-term construction jobs, laying

1 the groundwork for the type of mixed
2 use development that will thrive
3 rather than relying on a pattern of
4 reacting only to what is proposed.
5 Change is no doubt needed on Market
6 East. However, this project is not
7 it. Thank you.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: Thank you. Chair
10 recognizes Councilmember Jamie
11 Gauthier.

12 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

13 Thank you, Council President. My
14 question is for Mel. But first,
15 thank you to all of you for
16 testifying. Mel, I wanted to start
17 by saying I'm really sorry that you
18 were displaced and that you lost
19 your home. I think the fight for
20 the University City Townhomes is --
21 it's just one that will never leave
22 me.

23 I agree with you that as
24 a city, we have to do much more to

1 protect people's housing and to end
2 the housing crisis. And while I do
3 think we had some wins with the
4 Townhomes around the tenant fund and
5 securing the piece of the property
6 that we did for future affordable
7 housing development, I know that
8 it's not enough and I think that you
9 and every single UC Townhomes
10 resident deserve better.

11 I wanted to ask you, as
12 an advocate fighting against the
13 displacement of communities of color
14 with years in the fight, what's your
15 opinion, if you've had a chance to
16 look at it or hear about it, about
17 some of the measures that are being
18 proposed for anti-displacement as it
19 relates to Chinatown and what would
20 you add or what would you change?

21 MS. HAIRSTON: I think
22 more -- I think what's most
23 important is people -- the people
24 in -- the leaders of these

1 communities need to be more involved
2 with these conversations. I mean,
3 too many of these proposals,
4 directives, go passed the people.

5 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

6 Yeah.

7 MS. HAIRSTON: The
8 community leaders need to be a part
9 of that so that can be discussed
10 together on how everybody can
11 thrive. This cannot be a one-way
12 street. This has to go both ways
13 and community leaders should be
14 entered into these proposals and
15 conversations about proposals such
16 as this. And other proposals with
17 housing across the city should be
18 talked with not only between the
19 city and the developers, but also
20 leaders of the community. That's
21 one guaranteed thing that needs to
22 change for all of this to work where
23 everybody can thrive together.

24 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

1 I couldn't agree with you more.

2 Thank you so much for being here.

3 Thank you, Council President.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

5 JOHNSON:

6 No, thank you. And

7 publicly thank you for the work that

8 your councilwoman did going against

9 the powers that be regarding UC

10 Townhomes. And so I was there. I

11 witnessed it, I watched her through

12 the process, and although she wasn't

13 able to, like, totally overhaul the

14 whole process, she did stand on

15 business on behalf of that community

16 and give some very, very powerful

17 interest to make sure that there was

18 some give back and she took her to

19 court and was sued and is still 10

20 times tall on behalf of your

21 community in West Philadelphia. So,

22 yes, I acknowledge that.

23 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank you

24 for that.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON:

3 Thank you. Thank you
4 everyone for your testimony. Thank
5 you very much. Will the clerk
6 please call the next panel, please?

7 CHIEF CLERK: Regina
8 Hairston, Katherine Hicks, Mo
9 Rushdy, Lynette Sutton, please make
10 your way to the upfront.

11 MS. HAIRSTON: Good
12 afternoon.

13 VICE CHAIR: If you could
14 please state your name for the
15 record and proceed with your
16 testimony.

17 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank you.
18 Good afternoon. Regina A. Hairston,
19 President, CEO for the African
20 American Chamber of Commerce for
21 Pennsylvania, New Jersey and
22 Delaware. Good afternoon, Majority
23 Leader Gilmore Richardson and
24 members of City Council. Again, my

1 name is Regina A. Hairston and I
2 serve as the president and CEO of
3 the African-American Chamber of
4 Commerce for Pennsylvania, New
5 Jersey and Delaware, representing
6 the collective voice of over 200,000
7 Black-owned businesses in the
8 tri-state.

9 I am honored to address
10 you today in support of the proposed
11 development of 76 Place, a project
12 that has garnered widespread
13 endorsement across Philadelphia for
14 its transformative potential. As
15 the leader of an organization
16 representing a diverse spectrum of
17 businesses, spanning small
18 enterprises to large firms and
19 encompassing industries from
20 professional services to
21 construction, and having surveyed
22 over 100 AACC members and conducted
23 over six focus groups, I can
24 confidently state that the Black

1 business community views 76 Place as
2 a monumental opportunity.

3 The development of 76
4 Place presents an unprecedented
5 avenue for the inclusion of growth
6 of Black-owned businesses. This
7 assertion is undeniable, standing
8 unchallenged even by the project's
9 most vocal critics. The details of
10 the 1.3 billion privately financed
11 investment by the 76ers ownership
12 are well documented. Their
13 commitment to diverse business
14 inclusion and equity, evident in
15 their comprehensive EOP is robust,
16 measurable, and actionable.

17 Leaders like Leslie
18 Smallwood-Lewis of Mosaic, who
19 recently addressed this Council,
20 have attested to the significance of
21 these commitments which extend to
22 the planning, development and
23 ongoing operations of the arena.

24 However, history has

1 taught us that commitments are only
2 as valuable as the mechanisms in
3 place to ensure the realization.
4 Too often pledges to engage Black-
5 owned businesses fail due to the
6 argument that a sufficient pipeline
7 of qualified businesses and workers
8 does not exist. While this
9 rationale is frequently invoked, it
10 reflects a broader systemic
11 challenge.

12 Philadelphia
13 disproportionately does have a low
14 rate of Black businesses and
15 entrepreneurial growth due to lack
16 of opportunity. It is within this
17 context that the 76ers have
18 distinguished themselves over the
19 past 18 months well before formal
20 legislation -- legislative processes
21 commenced or hearings were
22 scheduled. The 76ers engaged
23 proactively with the African
24 American Chamber of Commerce to

1 identify barriers faced by black-
2 owned businesses and explored
3 targeted interventions to overcome
4 those obstacles.

5 Importantly, they did not
6 limit their involvement to
7 discussions. They demonstrated
8 tangible commitment by allocating \$2
9 million to strengthen the AACC's
10 ability to support businesses in
11 season this opportunity. This
12 proactive long-term approach sets
13 the 76ers apart through national
14 benchmarking and direct engagement
15 with other franchises.

16 I can confidently state
17 that no other team, locally or
18 nationally, and I have traveled to
19 many of them, has undertaken such
20 comprehensive pre-approval efforts
21 to ensure the inclusion of
22 underrepresented businesses. The
23 76ers proactive investment
24 exemplifies a best in-class model

1 for equitable development.

2 Additionally, while the
3 African American Chamber of
4 Commerce's work has naturally
5 focused on our members, the findings
6 of our collaborative -- of our
7 collaboration are broadly
8 applicable. We have shared insights
9 that benefit all small diverse
10 businesses across Philadelphia,
11 ensuring that the initiative's
12 impact is inclusive. Moreover, the
13 76ers extended similar outreach to
14 other diverse chambers, underscoring
15 their intent to collaborative -- to
16 collaborate across communities, to
17 maximize the project's benefits.

18 The 76er's commitments go
19 beyond rhetoric. Their investments
20 in programs like Everybody Builds
21 and their aggressive EOP reflects a
22 comprehensive strategy to engage
23 diverse businesses and engage their
24 full participation in economic

1 opportunities created by the 76
2 Place.

3 In conclusion, the
4 development of the 76 Place
5 represents an innovative and
6 inclusive approach to urban
7 revitalization. Thank you for your
8 consideration.

9 VICE CHAIR: Thank you.
10 Thank you very much for your
11 testimony. We will ask that you
12 state your name for the record,
13 proceed with your testimony, and
14 please be mindful of the two-minute
15 limit. Okay. Thank you.

16 PUBLIC SPEAKER HICKS:
17 All right. Thank you. Good
18 afternoon, Councilwoman Gilmore
19 Richardson and members of the
20 Philadelphia City Council's
21 Committee as a whole. My name is
22 Catherine Hicks. I'm the current
23 and recently reelected president of
24 the NAACP Philadelphia Branch.

1 Thank you. Thank you.

2 I am honored to speak on
3 behalf of the members of our branch
4 in support of the City Council
5 legislation that would enable this
6 Philadelphia 76ers to develop 76
7 Place at Market East if approved.

8 On that basis, I urge you to
9 favorably report this legislation
10 out of the committee of a whole with
11 the hopes that it would soon pass by
12 City Council and signed by Mayor
13 Parker.

14 In May of this year. I
15 was proud to endorse the
16 Philadelphia 76ers development
17 project that would not only bring a
18 major athletic entertainment arena
19 to Center City Philadelphia, but
20 would introduce significant economic
21 opportunities and other benefits
22 that the 76 Place at Market East
23 project would provide.

24 The NAACP is the nation's

1 oldest, largest and most widely
2 recognized grassroots based civil
3 rights organization. Our motto is,
4 when we fight, we win. We always
5 fight in the interest of the
6 underserved and the up
7 underrepresented for those who have
8 been marginalized and feel
9 forgotten, for Black communities who
10 rightly deserve more but receive far
11 less than their counterparts.

12 Philadelphia, being
13 identified as the biggest poor city
14 in America should by no means be
15 called to complacency. It should
16 trigger a call to action in all of
17 us, no matter who we are or what
18 neighborhood we live in.

19 The Philadelphia branch
20 NAACP is supporting the proposed
21 76ers Place at Market East
22 development because it believes that
23 this development comes at a unique
24 moment offering a chance to

1 collaborate with the community
2 stakeholders in order to bring about
3 positive change across the city and
4 in the Black communities in
5 particular.

6 This \$1.3 billion
7 project, using no local government
8 subsidies, will provide greater
9 access to workforce development and
10 career opportunities, and will
11 enable residents in traditionally
12 overlooked communities with
13 significant socioeconomic
14 challenges, to find dignity instead
15 of being discounted and thrive more
16 while feeling threatened less.

17 The decision to support
18 76 Place at Market East did not come
19 easily. We had discussion after
20 discussion with the team. We asked
21 tough questions, and through all of
22 the back and forth, we received
23 assurances from the Sixers that we
24 would have a seat at the table.

1 Our concerns would be
2 addressed, all voices with regard to
3 the project would be heard, civil
4 rights would be protected, and
5 measurable social justice matters
6 like diverse diversity, equity, and
7 inclusion goals would be pursued.

8 I'm pleased to share that
9 not only was I made comfortable with
10 the Sixers' responses and
11 commitments, but after discussion in
12 the Branch's Economic Development
13 Committee, executive committee and
14 general body meetings, we saw that a
15 majority of the members who
16 participated or were on board as
17 well. Many of us agree that by
18 actively participating in the
19 discussions and decision making
20 processes, the NAACP can help ensure
21 that needs of the communities are
22 taken into account.

23 Our branch regularly
24 fights for criminal justice reforms,

1 increased educational benefits,
2 better election participation, and
3 affordable decent housing. And in
4 this instance, having a developer
5 who prioritizes reimagining Market
6 Street East in a way that reserves
7 decades of decline, doesn't displace
8 Chinatown residents or businesses,
9 it facilitates continued access to
10 Jefferson Hospital's emergency room
11 and manages traffic congestion and
12 public safety interest is
13 invaluable. We must fight the good
14 fight --

15 Okay. Yes. We must
16 fight the good fight on economic
17 empowerment terms where greater
18 access to new wealth building
19 opportunities that lead to the
20 sustainability of our communities
21 occur.

22 In closing, the NAACP,
23 Philadelphia branch, loves our city
24 is enthusiastic about the prospect

1 and at hand and is excited to be on
2 the team. That's why we,
3 respectfully, urge you to favorably
4 report the legislative package out
5 of the committee of the whole, so
6 that the 76 Place at Market East can
7 advance as quickly as possible.
8 Thank you.

9 PUBLIC SPEAKER RUSHDY:

10 Good afternoon, Council President
11 Johnson and Honorable
12 Councilmembers, I wanted to thank
13 you -- first, thank you for the
14 opportunity to testify before you
15 today in regard to the proposed
16 Sixers Arena. My name is Mo Rushdy
17 and I -- today I testify on behalf
18 of the Philadelphia Building
19 Industry Association as its
20 president.

21 I happen to also chair
22 the Philadelphia Accelerator Fund
23 and a proud leader in the UDA, both
24 efforts promoting a 100% Black and

1 Brown developers to do tens of
2 millions of work in our city. I'm
3 not testifying today on their
4 behalf.

5 My support comes from a
6 simple place; jobs, opportunity and
7 great possibilities for an area that
8 has been dead for a long time. Yes,
9 9,000 jobs, good paying jobs, family
10 sustaining jobs. The folks behind
11 me here today.

12 Now, I don't remember who
13 asked that question yesterday to
14 Ryan Boyer about a discrepancy about
15 9,000 jobs versus 900. Yes, it
16 would be closer to 9,000 jobs. The
17 Economic Policy Institute states
18 that when it comes to construction,
19 every \$1 million of construction
20 work generates five-and-a-half
21 direct construction jobs. With that
22 math, a \$1.55 million project would
23 generate 8,525 jobs, so it's nowhere
24 closer to 900 jobs.

1 Opportunity. Yes, I was
2 moved listening to the testimony of
3 Pastor Carl Day about being
4 pro-opportunity. Opportunity that
5 can change lives. One that can
6 train a diverse workforce under the
7 umbrella of a multi-billion-dollar
8 project. An opportunity that can
9 give hope to the majority of
10 demographic of our population and
11 keeping them in the city.

12 Great possibilities for
13 Market East. A corridor that has
14 been long deprived of any serious
15 attempt for it to be reimagined and
16 bring it back to being a safe and
17 walkable major corridor. One that
18 is anchored by an arena, concerts,
19 restaurants, cafes, new buildings,
20 connecting City Hall to Independence
21 Mall.

22 See, I don't see a \$1.55
23 million arena. I see three or four
24 high-rise buildings, tens of

1 restaurants, 2,000 to 4,000
2 residential units in that corridor.
3 I see \$4 to \$5 billion worth of
4 work. A great possibility only for
5 the ones that are capable of
6 challenging the status quo, and that
7 can be bold as Ryan said yesterday.

8 I see an opportunity for
9 Chinatown to thrive with a million
10 people coming into the arena every
11 year. Tens of millions of dollars
12 could be spent inside Chinatown.
13 Now I want to put the arena aside
14 for a second and I'll speak about
15 our culture of no in any major
16 undertaking.

17 I personally fight to get
18 affordable home projects under our
19 city program approved by this body
20 and approved by some people in the
21 room. I was once recently told, Mo,
22 I can't allow you to do for 50
23 homes. It's too much. Fifty
24 affordable homes. Homes that create

1 home ownership and create wealth for
2 the population that Pastor Day was
3 talking about yesterday. That gives
4 an opportunity to -- for folks to
5 move up.

6 We have become anti-big
7 things. We have been addicted to
8 the status quo. It's my feeling
9 that we search for reasons not to do
10 things versus coming up with
11 solutions to do them. We are trying
12 to make everything perfect and we
13 lose so much opportunity in the
14 interim.

15 Like many in this room, I
16 belong to the Democratic Party. We
17 lost big in the last election. We
18 have to come to grips with the fact
19 that we lost so many working-class
20 people across America. We lost
21 folks like the ones that want to
22 build this arena.

23 We lost our belief and
24 conviction that we are a party that

1 can strengthen the middle class and
2 ones that create jobs and
3 opportunity. Let's prove them
4 wrong. Let us restore their trust.
5 Dear Councilmembers, please vote for
6 opportunity. Vote for hope. Vote
7 for the working man and woman.
8 Please vote for the arena. Thank
9 you.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

11 JOHNSON: Thank you. Girl Concrete.

12 PUBLIC SPEAKER SUTTON:

13 Good afternoon, Council, President
14 Johnson, and members of City
15 Council. My name is Lynette Sutton
16 and I'm the managing partner of Girl
17 Concrete. We are a union concrete
18 contractor that specializes in
19 foundations, slabs, concrete walls,
20 and sidewalks.

21 I thought I would come
22 here today as a business owner, to
23 briefly share the perspective of a
24 small diverse business like mine,

1 that is excited about 76th place,
2 but also feels the daily systemic
3 challenges of operating a local
4 women-led construction business in
5 Philadelphia.

6 Personally, when I hear
7 of sizable construction projects in
8 our city that have the potential to
9 generate tremendous economic impact
10 for communities and local
11 businesses, I will tell you that
12 like many of you, we can't help but
13 to feel skeptical. We wonder will
14 we be a part, included, get a real
15 opportunity on the site, or will we
16 be watching from the other side of
17 the build? In our case, the other
18 side of the construction fence.

19 For us, the opportunities
20 that have truly made an impact for
21 Girl Concrete's workforce are those
22 were collectively the owners,
23 developers, GCs, the city and EOP
24 oversight committees have worked

1 together to ensure diversity and
2 inclusivity from the onset, not just
3 for cookie crumbs, but real
4 opportunity.

5 That is what 76 Place has
6 the potential to be. A real
7 opportunity for all, including those
8 that surround the build, not just
9 the select few. I may just be a
10 small local business, but I have
11 full confidence that the Sixers can
12 get this right. We have a history
13 with the team that predates the
14 project, and I know their commitment
15 to the city and diverse businesses
16 like mine is real.

17 In 2021, during COVID,
18 our other entity, Girl Contracting,
19 was selected as one of the first
20 winners for the 76ers Buy Black
21 award. Through that partnership,
22 the 76ers marketed our business to
23 their fan base using social media,
24 radio and TV. And it actually

1 worked so well that the volume of
2 leads broke our website.

3 They also provided us
4 technical assistance on branding and
5 access to many of their senior
6 executives. This was exposure and
7 coaching that we would've never had
8 or been able to afford.

9 Since then, we've
10 launched another business, Girl
11 Concrete. We're on flagship
12 projects in the city, 30th Street
13 Station and the Bellwether District.
14 And recently, we're recognized as
15 the Business of the Year. While
16 that is all great, it's what we've
17 done with those opportunities that
18 matter. And what we have been able
19 to do is to create local jobs.

20 Our workforce are women,
21 men, returning citizens, apprentices
22 in the trades, people from the
23 communities that actually, surround
24 the build regardless of gender,

1 creed, or ethnicity. People who are
2 talented but often overlooked.

3 People who just need a shot or a
4 second chance. That's my workforce.

5 Look, it's not easy being
6 a woman in construction, let alone a
7 Latina in concrete. But the
8 partnerships and relationships that
9 we've built with the Sixers and
10 because of their introductions, have
11 helped us to break barriers and
12 create new jobs, and that is a story
13 that I have not yet heard emerge in
14 these hearings.

15 Essentially, how the
16 Sixers have helped far before 76
17 Place was even an idea. So in
18 closing, as a member of the small
19 business community, I urge you to
20 vote in support of 76 Place because
21 as you know, it's not often that you
22 find an owner or a developer with a
23 path, not a will, not a desire, but
24 a long-term proven concrete path to

1 move female diverse and local small
2 businesses forward in a way that we
3 can all feel. I thank you.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

5 JOHNSON:

6 Thank you. Thank you for
7 your testimony. And before opening
8 up to the floor, I want to go back
9 to Ms. Hairston. Just real quick,
10 regarding the African American
11 Chamber. Is there any
12 recommendations or best practices,
13 from your perspective, and in the
14 work that you are doing that we can
15 do that strengthens or takes the DEI
16 commitment to the next level?

17 MS. HAIRSTON: Thank you
18 for that question, Councilman. What
19 I did not articulate in my testimony
20 is that the African American Chamber
21 of Commerce was commissioned to do a
22 study by the 76ers.

23 What we looked at is if
24 they have a commitment, and I think

1 everyone here knows there's a 40%
2 commitment to black concessionaires
3 for 76 Place. That's great, that's
4 inclusion. But in order to have
5 equity for that to actually happen,
6 there has to be interventions to get
7 our businesses there. We have
8 plenty of businesses that are ready
9 for that opportunity today, but in
10 order to build a pipeline, we have
11 to be intentional.

12 The African American
13 Chamber of Commerce has a study.
14 The study is ready to be reviewed by
15 our board of directors. Once our
16 board of directors have had the
17 opportunity to review the study, it
18 will be made public. It should be
19 made public by next week. There are
20 10 recommendations that,
21 specifically, support DEI in this
22 particular project.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON: And would that include --

1 I know we've had these conversations
2 before, but I want to go on the
3 record with it. Besides the
4 concession stands, right, we also
5 know in a project such as this
6 magnitude, somebody's going to get
7 the bond work, somebody's going to
8 do the architect work, somebody's
9 going to get -- somebody's going to
10 get the contract for cleaning,
11 somebody's going to get the contract
12 for security. How does that play a
13 role from a professional services
14 standpoint? When you talk about the
15 vending and procurement, somebody's
16 going to provide the food that
17 people are going to eat down at the
18 stadium, in the event that this
19 project moves forward.

20 Talk about the role that
21 the African American Chamber is
22 doing in working with a diverse --
23 inclusive diverse group of other
24 chambers that you have been working

1 with in the past, that play a role
2 in this particular project.

3 MS. HAIRSTON: Certainly.

4 So the work that we have done with
5 the 76ers can be replicated
6 throughout any diverse businesses --
7 small businesses. It is inclusive
8 of all professional services as
9 well. And so it just does not
10 include concessionaires. The reason
11 why we're focusing on
12 concessionaires in the study is
13 because when you go in an arena, you
14 have to eat and you have to drink.
15 Currently, when you go in arenas, in
16 the arenas that I have traveled to,
17 you do not see black businesses
18 represented.

19 So this was an
20 opportunity to ensure that this
21 project has representation of
22 ownership by Black businesses.
23 There will be other opportunities
24 for Black professionals to have

1 contracts in this project. We are
2 partnering with the 76ers to be an
3 advisory for their RFP process. So
4 any bid that's put out, they are
5 working and have committed to the
6 African American Chamber of Commerce
7 that we will be a partner in that
8 process.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON: And that's different?

11 MS. HAIRSTON: It's very
12 different. Their entire engagement
13 has been very different. And I can
14 say my board of directors for 31
15 years have been fighting for this
16 day. And to be able to deliver this
17 report to them next week for the
18 work that they have been doing for
19 31 years, I am elated and proud.

20 It was not easy taking
21 this vote for the 76 project. My
22 board members were called, they were
23 threatened for business. My staff
24 received calls or we were called

1 everything but the child of God and
2 I still get those calls and got
3 those calls yesterday.

4 So it wasn't easy to do
5 this, but the 76ers have been a good
6 partner in this. This is an
7 agreement that we work together.
8 This is what we've been fighting
9 for, right? Black businesses and
10 organizations that have the
11 opportunity to be at the table to
12 conduct business. And that is
13 exactly what we were able to do in
14 this project, and it's a model going
15 forward.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON:

18 Thank you. Mo Rushdy, in
19 one capacity, you had the BIA, but
20 also another capacity you created
21 the Accelerator Fund that,
22 specifically, focuses on African
23 American and people of color
24 developers have an opportunity to

1 participate in the development
2 that's taking place in the city of
3 Philadelphia.

4 What opportunities are
5 you advocating for to make sure
6 those who come through the
7 Accelerator Fund program, and I know
8 that's primarily on the city side,
9 like turn the key types of programs,
10 but in projects such as this to help
11 individuals get to the next level
12 from the development and contracting
13 standpoint?

14 PUBLIC SPEAKER RUSHDY:

15 Well, Council President,
16 we have seen a lot of talk and a lot
17 of actions and there's a lot of
18 efforts that are being done, such as
19 the ones that Regina is talking
20 about when it comes to the vendors
21 and the contractor's base. The UDA
22 is really focused more, and the
23 Accelerator Fund, specifically, is
24 focused on creating a hundred

1 percent Black and Brown owned

2 developers, landlords, right?

3 One of the things that I

4 truly believe in is that we have

5 been cornered through the system,

6 through the government system, over

7 decades of the minority components

8 whether it's through government

9 jobs, whether through RFPs. And

10 what we're trying to change here is

11 to have an organic growth and having

12 a growth and creating a good cohort

13 of forty, fifty, sixty, a hundred

14 percent Black and owned developers

15 that are doing over 5- to \$10

16 million worth of work every year.

17 We have done this by

18 raising tens of millions from our

19 conventional lenders who are members

20 of the BIA by raising money through.

21 And that's not just me, there is a

22 whole team behind us that includes a

23 very robust board and the

24 Accelerator Fund and the BIA, making

1 sure that we are leveraging all of
2 our contacts to make sure that we
3 are actually bringing opportunity to
4 people.

5 We have seen this already
6 working. We have been working, we
7 have worked with Councilmember Jamie
8 for disposing public land and
9 creating an opportunity for a dozen
10 of developers to be each doing their
11 3- to \$4 million worth of work where
12 they are a hundred percent owners.
13 They're not partnering with anyone,
14 while still maintaining their AOP
15 requirements in terms of vendors
16 that they are actually hiring on
17 these jobs. Okay?

18 It is very important that
19 we support that. It is very
20 important that we focus on that end
21 of the business because once you
22 create that class of Black and Brown
23 developers in the city, in all these
24 neighborhoods, then we're seeing

1 organic growth of Black and Brown
2 vendors within all aspects of our
3 industry.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

5 JOHNSON: Thank you very much. The
6 chair recognizes councilmember Jim
7 Harrity.

8 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

9 Thank you, Council President. My
10 question's for Mo Rushdy. Mo,
11 you've been doing development for
12 quite a long time, and I know, large
13 and small developments, you know,
14 across the city. And we've heard
15 Mr. Levy say that he believes that
16 the way we revitalize Market East is
17 through mixed use and other avenues.
18 You know, as a professional, as
19 somebody who has successfully
20 developed properties, because I know
21 a lot of developers who tried to be
22 developers and tried to do projects
23 but weren't successful or weren't
24 able to make a profit.

1 Through your experience,
2 if you were re-visioning Market
3 East, what kind of businesses would
4 you try to bring in your
5 development, if you were the one
6 doing development along or not
7 besides the stadium? I'm not
8 talking about the stadium, just in
9 the actual area.

10 PUBLIC SPEAKER RUSHDY:

11 Right. So thank you for
12 the question, councilman. Now,
13 again, you know, people are looking
14 at the arena as the project of
15 Market East. That's just a start.
16 I have a very good contact, but I
17 don't want to put them on the spot
18 here, who basically said that there
19 are already investors and developers
20 who are looking at waiting for the
21 arena to pass where they're already
22 eyeing properties on Market East to
23 make sure that they are going to be
24 building, you know, high rises,

1 multi-family, want to include
2 affordable housing in it. This is
3 just a gate to a lot of development
4 and revitalization that happens to
5 that Market East.

6 Again, it is very
7 important to recognize that we have
8 a lot to offer, right? This is a
9 big job. There are no subsidies
10 here, right? People can take -- or
11 talk about, you know, that this
12 might be a scam. This is not.
13 Refuse to listen to this. There is
14 private money, private \$1.5 billion
15 job for a developer that can cross
16 the river and it's not a bluff for
17 \$800 million and get it built where
18 these guys don't build it and we
19 watch them going there, right? This
20 is serious. I mean, this is it,
21 right?

22 Do we want to have an
23 arena? Do we want to have a
24 Philadelphia 76ers that are being

1 built by 9,000 members, good paying
2 members here? Or do we want to just
3 go back and forth and talk about how
4 we are, just one project is
5 destroying all of Market East?

6 Market East is a dead
7 corridor. I challenge anyone to go
8 and walk at 7:00 or 8:00 at night,
9 go and have a walk. Take eight
10 blocks going back and forth, and
11 then give me your opinion. All
12 right. I think Chinatown needs to
13 be preserved. I think the
14 legislations, the companion
15 legislations that were offered by
16 Councilman Squilla to preserve, to
17 make sure that you don't have
18 predatory development that happens
19 in Chinatown. Okay?

20 We have to make sure that
21 this does not happen. We have to
22 make sure that we're listening and
23 hearing on what's going on, right?
24 But let us not have the either or

1 conversation because we have seen so
2 many, I am having them right now
3 myself. Again, on a way much
4 smaller scale, on \$20 million jobs
5 building a city's program, right? A
6 city's program, and I still get
7 opposition. It's a joke, quite
8 honestly, right?

9 So today, we have a
10 decision to make. It's very simple.
11 We either build an arena in the
12 city, right? And it gets all the
13 benefits that we can get. The
14 increased city wages for all the
15 members that are going to be working
16 here, the small businesses that are
17 going to be revived and opening up,
18 right? Or we can say, no, this is,
19 you know, not for the city of
20 Philadelphia. That wouldn't be -- I
21 mean, I don't mean any disrespect
22 here, but it wouldn't be unusual for
23 us to basically say no. Okay?

24 Let them cross the river

1 on the other side. Okay? And then
2 we can all play the blame game
3 afterwards. This is in my opinion,
4 an easy decision, while we have
5 Chinatown in our hearts and making
6 sure that we are preserving and
7 making sure we do the best that we
8 can to make sure that they're not
9 displaced.

10 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

11 Thank you. Thank you, Council
12 President,

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON: Chair recognizes,
15 Councilmember Phillips.

16 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

17 Thank you, Council President. Mo,
18 you are --you've been a long-term
19 developer in the city of
20 Philadelphia. I just want you to --
21 if you can just talk more about, you
22 know, oftentimes people can see
23 development as -- in a adverse type
24 of position. In what ways can

1 development of this stature be a
2 part of the growth of city -- of
3 city of Philadelphia to address some
4 of the community issues that people
5 are talking about? How can
6 something of this magnitude be,
7 potentially, helpful that maybe you
8 can talk more about how development
9 is helpful to support social issues
10 and even capture hearts, if
11 anything.

12 PUBLIC SPEAKER RUSHDY:

13 That's a -- that's a -- that's a
14 great question and it's a loaded
15 question. So let me -- let me leak
16 you a stat that we had in part of
17 our, kind of, like last election
18 cycle. Eighty percent of people in
19 the city of Philadelphia think that
20 -- look at developers negatively,
21 right? That's a stat.

22 Eight out of ten think
23 that developers, quite honestly, are
24 scumbags. That's the way they look

1 at it. Okay? That's a problem,
2 right? I always say in the city of
3 Philadelphia, we start from below
4 zero when we go and approach the
5 neighborhoods with a project, right?
6 We start from below zero. We're not
7 starting from a neutral place.

8 Now, there are reasons
9 for that. And I think the people in
10 the communities are not wrong,
11 right? They're not wrong. Okay?
12 Why are they not wrong? Because we
13 have a lot of poverty in these
14 neighborhoods, right? We have a lot
15 of poverty, but that is why someone
16 like -- or an entity like the BIA as
17 a business entity, was the only
18 business entity in the city of
19 Philadelphia that came in in support
20 of Council President, Clarke's MPI
21 and 1% construction tax.

22 We, as a business
23 community said, we support a 1%
24 construction tax, to support to get

1 and float \$400 million worth of
2 bonds. So that we can give
3 opportunities for people in the
4 neighborhoods to get that \$75,000
5 down payment assistance that the
6 city of Philadelphia has given. To
7 be able to have people afford and
8 families move back into the
9 neighborhoods and create
10 opportunities. Okay?

11 This is -- this is big.

12 And, Councilmen, this is where I
13 come here and say, you know, do we
14 have a unified vision for growth?
15 Do we have a unified vision that we
16 are sending a message to the people
17 outside of the city of Philadelphia,
18 that want to come into the city of
19 Philadelphia and spend money and
20 invest in projects, and tell them
21 that we are open for business?

22 Or are we going to go
23 through this process and them
24 looking at the city of Philadelphia

1 and be like, you know what, this
2 isn't the city for us. We are at
3 Crossroads. We have a new mayor, we
4 have a new vision, we have a new
5 Council President. Okay? And there
6 is a lot of enthusiasm that going
7 forward, that we are open for
8 business, we're creating
9 opportunity, and we're making sure
10 we are really going there to the
11 middleman and making sure that they
12 are never forgotten again.

13 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

14 Thank you. Just one quick question
15 for Regina Hairston, president of
16 the chamber commerce -- African
17 American Chamber of Commerce. Will
18 the concession stands -- so
19 Philadelphia's very clear, the
20 arena's concession stands, are they
21 going to be a hundred percent
22 occupied? Well, not a hundred
23 percent.

24 When I say, like, the 40,

1 50% is going to be dedicated to
2 minority owned concessions and so
3 forth. Is it going to be the full
4 concession stand or are they going
5 to have a part in a concession
6 stand? Or has that -- has that
7 detail been discussed? So for
8 example, this is like someone is
9 selling cheesesteaks, but the
10 minority business is selling cookies
11 a little bit. You know, that type
12 of situation on the side there.

13 MS. HAIRSTON: So when
14 you get our report that's being
15 published next week, it will be
16 outlined, but the concession,
17 there's ownership in the 76 Place
18 will be 40% Black owned.

19 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
20 Got you. Thank you so
21 much, Council President.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

23 JOHNSON: You're welcome. The chair
24 recognizes Councilmember Jeffrey J.

1 Young.

2 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:

3 Thank you, Mr. President. This
4 question I have is for the folks who
5 represent membership organizations.
6 Could you tell us -- I might have
7 missed it. Could you tell us the
8 number of people you represent and
9 the number of people, I guess, you
10 surveyed for a position on this
11 particular project?

12 MS. HAIRSTON: Who was
13 that question -- was that question
14 for me?

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON: I think the membership
17 organization would be the African
18 America Chamber --

19 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:

20 Yeah. It would be the, I guess, the
21 NAACP and African American Chamber.
22 Yeah.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON: -- and NAACP.

1 MS. HAIRSTON: Certainly.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

3 JOHNSON:

4 Oh, well, BIA is, as
5 well, because you're a membership
6 organization, as well.

7 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: I
8 don't know if they -- I don't know
9 if he served -- I'm sure all they're
10 members, you know.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

12 JOHNSON: I think we're close to a
13 hundred percent, but I'll try to
14 find the actual stat.

15 MS. HAIRSTON: So I don't
16 have an actual stat for you, but
17 I'll just go back to my testimony.
18 So we represent 200,000 Black
19 businesses in the Tri-state area.

20 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:
21 Uh-huh.

22 MS. HAIRSTON: About
23 80,000 of those businesses are in
24 Pennsylvania.

1 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:

2 Uh-huh.

3 MS. HAIRSTON: When we
4 decided to support this project as a
5 part of the commission study that we
6 did for the Philadelphia 76ers, we
7 surveyed over 100 members, and that
8 is in our report. And we conducted
9 six focus groups.

10 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: So
11 80,000 members in Pennsylvania with
12 only 100 participated in the study?

13 MS. HAIRSTON: So the 100
14 people that participated in the
15 study was people that were
16 interested in concessionaires, being
17 concessionaires at the particular
18 arena. So the study is focused
19 around food and beverage, and so
20 those are the stats that I'm giving
21 you.

22 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:
23 Okay. Thank you. So the folks who
24 participated in the study would have

1 a direct interest -- for that direct
2 financial interest if that arena
3 gets developed or not based on
4 concessionary food and beverage
5 things like that?

6 MS. HAIRSTON: So I'm not
7 really clear on the question, but we
8 have not received, not one person
9 that is a member of the African
10 American Chamber of Commerce who is
11 not in support of this project.
12 That has not happened. We haven't
13 gotten it.

14 Everyone that we've
15 talked to have been supportive of
16 the project. We've sent out
17 newsletters, we sent out information
18 over the last year and a half and
19 there has not been one person that
20 is a member of the African American
21 Chamber of Commerce who has said
22 they don't support this project.

23 PUBLIC SPEAKER HICKS:
24 And for the Philadelphia branch

1 NAACP, we have 1400 members, they --
2 who were notified about the process
3 of being in support of the 76ers
4 agreement. I don't have the amount
5 who actually voted on it. We
6 started out with our executive
7 committee members, and then we sent
8 information out and to our general
9 body meeting, we voted on it. And,
10 a hundred percent of those who
11 participated agreed to support.

12 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:

13 Okay. Thank you, Mr. President.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

16 Councilman O'Rourke.

17 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

18 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

19 Thank you, Mr. President. And good
20 afternoon to all on the panel. I
21 did want to ask, Mr. Rushdy, you
22 raised a point, and this is
23 something that's come up a couple of
24 times. People have said this a

1 couple of times in the hearings and
2 it's been bothering me, so I wanted
3 to ask it.

4 People advocating for
5 cultural preservation shouldn't
6 engage in ultimatums or either or,
7 but if the Sixers don't get the
8 arena, they get to literally pick up
9 and leave and go across the river.
10 Do you -- do you think that that's,
11 like, an appropriate thing -- do you
12 think that is -- that is fair, just,
13 the right way to approach it? Is it
14 or are folks off for advocating for
15 preservation for the community and
16 then the Sixers are right to pick up
17 and leave in that ultimatum? How
18 would you speak to that?

19 PUBLIC SPEAKER RUSHDY:
20 Welcome to my daily life,
21 Councilman. So these choices we
22 make even in the neighborhoods,
23 right? I mean, we are all talking
24 about the arena because it's a \$1.6

1 billion job or \$1.5 billion job.
2 But we go through the same things
3 when we're dealing with -- when
4 we're going into communities,
5 especially communities that has not
6 seen development, right? And they
7 look at developments as a threat.

8 This is my opinion,
9 right? My honest opinion from the
10 heart. Anything that disturbs the
11 status quo immediately is looked
12 upon as bad. That is a given.
13 That's the city of Philadelphia.
14 I've been doing business here for 25
15 years and I have never entered into
16 a community where they took me up in
17 arms and said, this is. I'm telling
18 you, even on affordable housing jobs
19 sanctioned by the city of
20 Philadelphia and turned the key jobs
21 where people will be getting a
22 \$75,000 soft second mortgage, I
23 still get that same resistance.

24 So when you talk about

1 cultural preservation, I'm sorry,
2 cultural preservation, I think
3 that's noble. I think what you're
4 doing is noble to make sure that
5 Chinatown is preserved. That's
6 admirable. I think we should all do
7 the same thing. But it cannot be
8 the reason -- it cannot be the
9 reason to deny moving forward. It
10 cannot be the reason. We cannot put
11 progress on our city and growth,
12 okay, in one hand and say, well,
13 it's either we're going to preserve
14 the cultural identity of Chinatown,
15 or you got to build that arena. So
16 figure it out.

17 Because if you build that
18 arena, now you're a bad person
19 because you're really against
20 Chinatown. Not at all. Not at all.
21 When Comcast came with their -- with
22 their proposal down in South Philly,
23 I was the first to go out there and
24 be like, thank you, great. Let's

1 now support the arena and let's
2 support Comcast and what they're
3 doing in South Philly. Okay?

4 Chinatown needs to be
5 preserved. We need to put the
6 safeguards. Yesterday, we had a
7 meeting ourselves to go over the
8 overlays that were put in Chinatown.
9 Typically, you know, a community --
10 an entity like the BIA is against
11 overlays. We hate overlays because
12 you just can't predict what you can
13 do, right? When you have overlays
14 versus a zoning designation that's
15 already predetermined, it's a
16 problem.

17 But when we heard about
18 the overlay, the inclusionary zoning
19 overlay that was introduced there to
20 preserve affordable housing for
21 Chinatown, as part of the idea of
22 making sure that you're preserving
23 the price points for Chinatown, we
24 see this as a step to make sure that

1 you're preserving Chinatown, right?

2 When you look at the

3 overlay that prevents over 3,000

4 square feet, I think, or, you know,

5 how many buildings that gets

6 acquired, it prevents predatory. I

7 call it predatory, but you know what

8 I mean where developers will go in

9 and go and buy four or five

10 buildings, take it down and let's go

11 in and put a high rise in Chinatown

12 and here you go, you break

13 Chinatown.

14 I think that is

15 mitigation factors that you are

16 doing with your advocacy to make

17 sure that this does not happen. But

18 the answer cannot be, let's just not

19 build the arena to preserve

20 Chinatown. That is not the answer,

21 especially because in my opinion,

22 it's not fair for Market East.

23 Market East. We're forgetting

24 Market East.

1 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

2 Heard. If I may, Mr. President.

3 Heard. I -- but I do -- if you can

4 say, is it appropriate for the

5 Sixers who are the Philadelphia's

6 basketball team to have only loyalty

7 to, if we -- if we can build an

8 arena here, we'll stay, but if not,

9 we'll leave. But then turn the

10 question on community members who

11 are advocating for the community to

12 say, if you don't go with this, then

13 you're being unreasonable.

14 Do you think it's

15 appropriate to, kind of like, raise

16 -- leverage that on the community

17 itself as advocating, especially

18 since so many of us are agreeing,

19 finally, that Chinatown must be

20 preserved and that they don't have

21 enough.

22 PUBLIC SPEAKER RUSHDY:

23 Councilman, see, again, I think the

24 framing of your question, in my

1 opinion, with and with all due
2 respect, is flawed to say that can
3 they exercise that leverage by
4 basically saying, well, if you don't
5 approve me, I'm going to go to the
6 other side.

7 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

8 That's what's they're saying.

9 PUBLIC SPEAKER RUSHDY:

10 No, no, no. I understand that. But
11 that is a fact. I have an offer.
12 It happens when we sell our homes.
13 If you don't give me that price for
14 my house, I have an offer on my
15 house. Is that -- is that mean?
16 It's not mean. It is -- it is --
17 there's a transaction happening.
18 It's a transaction of \$1.4 billion.

19 So what are we thinking?

20 That when someone is trying, that
21 has a lease that's going to be over
22 in 2031, we think they're leaving it
23 till 2028, '29 maybe we're going to
24 solve it, maybe we're not. No. No.

1 They're business people. They're
2 looking at options. Their first
3 option, and what they really want to
4 do is they want to stay in the city
5 of Philadelphia and they want to be
6 the Philadelphia 76ers. That is
7 what they want.

8 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

9 I would say for the record, and I'll
10 be done, Mr. President. I thank you
11 Mr. Rushdy for this. I would just
12 say it's still -- it's still
13 challenging for me to accept the
14 idea that as a team that has a place
15 to play, that folks have gone out of
16 their way to try to keep and support
17 and to provide for, already where
18 they exist, for an arena that won't
19 be up for a few more years.

20 And then to say that if
21 that team doesn't get exactly what
22 they want in this particular place
23 -- there are folks who have and I
24 have since, from the beginning said,

1 not against an arena in concept, but
2 an arena in the community that the
3 community is saying they don't want
4 there, after having heard the pros
5 and cons for it after a series of
6 meetings, and then say that somehow,
7 you know, there's some loyalty
8 there.

9 It sounds like their
10 desire, which is the tip for
11 billionaires, is to make more money.
12 But there is no loyalty coming here
13 or being expressed from the team.
14 But there's expected to be loyalty
15 from the community to let them do
16 what they want to do.

17 And I think that's a bit
18 unfair to ask the community, and as
19 an elected representative at large,
20 I think we should point that out. I
21 hear this back and forth. It just
22 -- it troubles me that this idea,
23 that we are being -- we are being
24 unreasonable by providing an -- by

1 an ultimatum but they're not. That
2 seems a bit disingenuous, but thank
3 you.

4 PUBLIC SPEAKER RUSHDY:

5 Absolutely. And if you
6 don't mind before -- just 10 seconds
7 here. If the owners of the Sixers
8 were looking at their bottom line,
9 you have my word, we would not be
10 sitting here today. If that is what
11 they want. Their bottom line only,
12 they would not be here today. Okay?
13 It's simple math, man. It's simple
14 math, Councilman. They -- there is
15 no bluff here.

16 If it's a business
17 transaction, they will not be
18 sitting here today. So I do think
19 that there is a serious will on
20 behalf of the 76ers of being here,
21 want to build it by the folks
22 sitting here today, make sure we're
23 providing an opportunity for -- in
24 the city of Philadelphia, reviving a

1 Market East corridor, put a CBA that
2 makes sure that it is covering
3 Chinatown, making sure that they are
4 protected. I sincerely believe that
5 that is their true good intention to
6 do that.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Thank you.

9 PUBLIC SPEAKER RUSHDY:

10 You're welcome.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

12 JOHNSON:

13 I want to thank all of
14 you for taking time out of your
15 schedule today and for your very
16 informative testimony. Well,
17 Mr. Christmas, please call the next
18 panel.

19 CHIEF CLERK: Mr. Shawmar
20 Pitts, Christopher Rogers, Erica
21 Guadalupe Nunez, Mercedes Bonilla,
22 please come forward.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON:

1 State your name, for the
2 record, then you can begin your
3 testimony.

4 PUBLIC SPEAKER ROGERS:

5 Anybody? Any one of us?

6 Okay. Christopher Rogers. Thank
7 you all for having the time. I'm
8 here representing as one of the
9 growing coalition of Black
10 Philadelphians who are taking a
11 active public stand against the
12 Sixers Arena proposal not in our
13 name.

14 I've been pretty
15 successful in local collaborative
16 efforts to preserve and sustain some
17 of the Philadelphia's cultural
18 treasure, such as The Paul Robeson
19 House, Hakim's bookstore, and most
20 recently, the National Historic
21 Landmark, Henry Ossawa Tanner House,
22 and Strawberry Mansion. I want to
23 thank Councilperson Richardson for
24 her support there.

1 These passionate personal
2 efforts speak to the importance of
3 uplifting and maintaining the rich
4 social fabric and deep cultural
5 heritage which informs sustainable,
6 equitable people responsive
7 neighborhood development.

8 Yet before all that
9 labor, I'm a neighbor and I strive
10 to be a good one as my mother taught
11 me. Being a good neighbor means
12 being willing to stand against
13 specific practices and policy
14 proposals that promise more
15 immediate community fragmentation
16 and cultural heritage displacement.
17 Then our future is speculative and
18 wishing on a star benefits would
19 serve our public interest.

20 Not too long ago, the
21 National Trust for Historic
22 Preservation, uplifted the Henry
23 Ossawa Tanner House to America's 11
24 most endangered historic places in

1 2023. And we were honored to reach
2 this designation alongside our
3 neighbors in Philadelphia's
4 Chinatown. Since the National Trust
5 has led continuing efforts that
6 evidence how many of America's
7 Chinatowns are disappearing through
8 public and private attack.

9 The ongoing initiative
10 showcases how these communities face
11 compounding threats and assemblage
12 of racialized and economic forces
13 that put at risk these special old
14 places where countless lives,
15 memories, and stories began and
16 continue to unfold. Indeed, black
17 neighborhoods such as Strawberry
18 Mansion, where the Tanner House is
19 located in Cobbs Creek where I live,
20 navigate the changing same.

21 From my public testimony
22 then I reminded the audience that we
23 Black and Asian Philly folks,
24 working to preserve our cultural

1 heritage come to recognize a legacy
2 of common resistance that we share
3 from our community self-determined
4 projects against the onslaught of a
5 cumulative, collective and
6 continuing policies of structural
7 inequity and impose austerity. I
8 reminded folks that we have not yet
9 been saved, but inspired by those
10 who came before us, we continue to
11 love and fight for our
12 neighborhoods.

13 Councilperson Kendra
14 Brooks testified that 70% of
15 Philadelphians stand against the
16 Sixers Arena proposal. Many of us
17 who watch our beat up Sixers
18 struggled through all our season
19 openers were forced to watch over
20 and over again a 22nd clip where
21 Mayor Parker exclaimed the power of
22 the people is more important than
23 the people in power.

24 And yet, the mayoral

1 administration came to endorse the
2 Sixers money, yet unpopular proposal
3 and went further to suggest that
4 their current lowly concessions
5 would be the best that we ever
6 achieve. Is this faith in the power
7 of the people or an admission that
8 who truly are the today's people in
9 power even as you mentioned,
10 Councilperson O'Rourke, the powers
11 that be that even impacted the
12 people's town homes.

13 To whom does our city's
14 elected representatives truly bend
15 its ear? From whom do those elected
16 by us to represent the freedom,
17 dreams of our communities take its
18 directives. What faith do we,
19 ultimately, display in the
20 collective wisdom of everyday
21 working families about what's right
22 for them in their neighborhoods?
23 Thank you.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1 JOHNSON: Thank you.

2 PUBLIC SPEAKER BONILLA:

3 My name is Mercedes Bonilla. Good
4 evening members of Council. I serve
5 as the founder of Leverage Economic
6 Solutions, which is a economic
7 development organization that has
8 served the state of Pennsylvania and
9 the city of Philadelphia as a whole.
10 I also serve as one of the newly
11 elected executive committee members
12 of the NAACP, Philadelphia Branch
13 2346B, in which in Philadelphia we
14 have more than one branch.

15 Catherine Hicks is our
16 president. We have 1,400 members in
17 which we just held the election on
18 11/16 of 2024, whereas only 172
19 members have voted. To turn
20 attention back to Councilmember
21 Jeffrey Young's question, we were
22 not given any email in reference to
23 any vote of any 76ers Place. We
24 were not sent any text messages and

1 I, as a member and a longtime member
2 of the NAACP, serving as at large
3 member in many different branches
4 over this country, I am horribly --
5 I stand horribly having to go
6 against the NAACP right now because
7 there's a lot of ambiguity here.

8 We have not voted and
9 there have been meetings that we
10 have all not been a part of. I am
11 in opposition, completely, of the
12 76ers Place as the NAACP
13 Philadelphia 2346B member and
14 executive committee member.

15 Going into Reed and
16 Handens plans, as well as other
17 plans and being a part of traffic
18 reports, there is no full plan for
19 Market East and or East Market area.
20 There are no full plans. There's
21 not a straightaway plan. There are
22 not plans that effectively
23 communicate port authority plans and
24 or bridge plans.

1 I want to recognize the
2 African American Chamber of Commerce
3 of three states, which is stated
4 Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and
5 Delaware, which in New Jersey I am a
6 native of. We already have an
7 African American Chamber of
8 Commerce. And which now we have
9 two, given that we have
10 Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and
11 Delaware here.

12 So I do want to recognize
13 that they did give some numbers, but
14 those numbers are skewed by only
15 contacting or allowing 100 people
16 within the organization to speak for
17 a body of businesses. To preserve
18 time of this panel, I'll yield my
19 time. Thank you.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

21 JOHNSON:

22 Excuse me one second.
23 The chair recognizes Councilmember
24 Katherine Gilmore Richardson.

1 COUNCILMEMBER RICHARDSON:

2 Thank you. Thank you
3 very much. Council president, I
4 just wanted to thank you all, so
5 much for coming in and for your
6 testimony, and it's nice to formally
7 meet you in-person, I didn't realize
8 that was you, relative to the Tanner
9 House Preservation, something that
10 I've cared deeply about over the
11 last several years.

12 And I just have to uplift
13 someone who's not here, who brought
14 that entire situation to me and
15 really helped us work through that
16 challenge, which is queen Judith
17 Robinson. She brought that
18 situation in North Philadelphia to
19 my attention.

20 We work with our former
21 Council President, Darrell Clarke,
22 and together with the support of
23 this body, we were able to help with
24 ensuring that we provided, needed

1 and necessary support for the
2 preservation for Tanner Household.
3 So I just wanted to thank you all
4 for those efforts and uplift, in her
5 absence, queen Judith Robinson for
6 the work that she has done for us to
7 be in this space. Thank you very
8 much.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON:

11 Thank you. Please state
12 your name for the record and begin
13 your testimony please.

14 PUBLIC SPEAKER NUNEZ:

15 All right. Thank you. Good
16 afternoon. My name is Erika
17 Guadalupe Nunez and I'm the director
18 of Juntos, a community led Latina
19 immigrant rights organization in
20 South Philadelphia, fighting for our
21 rights and against the
22 criminalization of our people.

23 We adamantly oppose the
24 construction of an arena in

1 Chinatown, and recognize it not only
2 as an attack on its immigrant
3 community, but as an attack on all
4 immigrant communities across the
5 city who have built and transformed
6 its sectors to serve as thriving
7 community and cultural hubs that
8 speak to the true essence and
9 resilience of our city. From north
10 to south, east and west, we say no
11 to an arena in Chinatown. There's a
12 movement phrase in Spanish, [SPANISH
13 LANGUAGE] which translates to the
14 people are not for sale, they're
15 loved and defended.

16 The attempts to sell out
17 Chinatown for the pet project of a
18 few billionaires will do nothing
19 more than rob our city and its
20 communities of the resources we need
21 to thrive.

22 From infrastructure to
23 operational costs tied to the
24 stadium, the proposed drain on state

1 funding and a tax break that would
2 cost our public schools \$7 million
3 annually, the 76ers Arena Project is
4 nothing short of a plan to sell out
5 communities. Instead of this
6 misguided proposal, we need a true
7 commitment to fund affordable
8 housing, mental health services,
9 schools, libraries, public transit,
10 and much more.

11 The developers behind
12 this plan are making false promises
13 about the supposed benefits of this
14 proposal, and we are calling on you
15 to open your eyes and keep your
16 hearts with the people you serve.
17 Many Latina immigrant community
18 members work in Chinatown. We know
19 that wealthy white team owners are
20 not considering their well-being
21 with this proposal. An attack on
22 Chinatown makes all of our
23 communities vulnerable to the beast
24 of gentrification.

1 If you allow this to
2 happen in Chinatown, what keeps
3 places like Calle Nueva safe.
4 Latina immigrant communities have
5 similarly transformed the 9th Street
6 business corridor into what it is
7 today. How long before wealthy
8 elites eye for another development
9 project, robbing decades of
10 transformation by our residents both
11 past and present? Immigrant
12 communities have built neighborhoods
13 that serve as vibrant neighbors --
14 networks of care, support, and
15 culture exchange out of necessity.
16 Places like Chinatown are
17 not accidents of geography. They're
18 the results of generations of
19 collected effort by people striving
20 to create spaces where they can
21 thrive, find safety and access
22 critical services and affordable
23 homes.
24 The construction of this

1 arena will disrupt and dismantle
2 these networks, leaving thousands of
3 residents vulnerable, not only to
4 the looming threats of political
5 agendas like Trump's, but also to
6 the systemic inequalities that
7 remain unresolved in our city. Know
8 this, the Latina immigrant community
9 does not want an arena in Chinatown.
10 We stand in solidarity with its
11 residents and the broader community
12 until this plan is no more.
13 [SPANISH LANGUAGE] The people United
14 will never be divided.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON:

17 State your name and
18 record for the record. Please begin
19 your testimony, sir.

20 PUBLIC SPEAKER PITTS:

21 Good afternoon, Mr. Council
22 President. How you doing today?

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON: I'm doing pretty good,

1 Mr. Pitts?

2 PUBLIC SPEAKER PITTS:

3 Yes. My name is Shawmar Pitts, and
4 I represent South Philadelphia Grays
5 Ferry neighborhood, and I'm part of
6 a environmental justice organization
7 called Philly Thrive. And we've sat
8 here and we've heard a lot of
9 testimony today and, you know, it's
10 hard to see and witness what's going
11 on because this is history in the
12 making, believe it or not. And I
13 want to be on the right side of
14 history.

15 And I know that people
16 see opportunity and building an
17 arena in Center City. They see
18 opportunity there, but at the
19 expense of community that has made
20 their life there and that lived
21 there. So I don't think it's
22 appropriate that we even consider
23 uprooting and displacing a community
24 that has lived there and has a

1 history there, right?

2 I don't think we should
3 even consider doing something to
4 people like that. And a lot of
5 times people ask me about why would
6 I be in defense of the people in
7 Chinatown. It's because when my
8 community was displaced, I didn't
9 like it. I didn't like to see the
10 gentrification going on in a Point
11 Breeze section of South Philadelphia
12 and in the Grays Ferry section of
13 South Philadelphia. I didn't like
14 it. And I don't think that is
15 appropriate for that to happen to
16 anyone. No doubt about it.

17 I want jobs for my black
18 people. I want jobs. All of the
19 people that come and talk about the
20 jobs, we can get the jobs, we can
21 build it anywhere we want. We can
22 build it anywhere we want. And we
23 can bring our minds together to
24 figure out how do we infuse Market

1 East? What should we build in
2 Market East that's going to be a
3 good economic development in our
4 city. We got the minds to do it.

5 We don't have to
6 sacrifice the people in Chinatown to
7 do that. And we don't have to --
8 and I think that also, you know, I'm
9 so glad that, you know, our
10 Councilman O'Rourke was here when he
11 asked about, you know, is it
12 appropriate to say if you don't
13 build it here, then I'm just going
14 to leave, right? Well, you know, my
15 thing is, if that's all it take for
16 you to leave, you wanted to leave
17 anyway.

18 You want to hold us
19 hostage because you can't get your
20 way right here, you could build it
21 somewhere else. We could revitalize
22 South Philadelphia where all the
23 stadiums are at and build it there,
24 a new state of the art facility, the

1 best in the world. We could build
2 it right there and it won't displace
3 anybody in Chinatown. How about
4 that?

5 We can come up with ideas
6 where it is a win-win. We can do
7 that, but we got to be willing to do
8 it. We can't just be on the wrong
9 side of history and do the wrong
10 things because the wrong things is
11 done to my folks all the time. All
12 the time.

13 And they come and they
14 promise us jobs. And just like the
15 young lady from Girl Concrete said,
16 when you come and you promise us
17 jobs and all of that, we skeptical.
18 And that's a -- that's a
19 understatement, skeptical, because
20 I'm going on your record. I seen
21 development in this city that I have
22 never seen before in the last 10, 15
23 years with laws in place, 40%
24 minority participation and all of

1 those things. And we don't get them
2 jobs. We ain't even getting them
3 jobs. So I'm going on your record.
4 So all them people in the building
5 trades, when they come and say build
6 it, yeah, I want you to build it
7 because I want the jobs too, but we
8 ain't been getting them.

9 We get hired and -- with
10 that 40% we get hired, and then
11 within a couple months in that job,
12 that job going to be there for seven
13 years. They going to be building
14 seven to 10 years. Within a couple
15 months we all laid off. So what
16 good is it for me if it's going to
17 be jobs there. What good is it for
18 me, if I go through the
19 apprenticeship program and get the
20 skills, what good is it for me if
21 I'm not going to be able to work
22 because they don't want to spread
23 that money out. They don't want me
24 counting the money at the end of the

1 day.

2 I'm not going to work
3 there seven years, five days a week
4 with overtime at \$60 an hour as an
5 electrician. They're not going to
6 allow that, they haven't been
7 allowing it. So why do we think all
8 of a sudden the Sixers care about us
9 and they going to give us jobs and
10 they going to look at people like me
11 and say, we going to give you a
12 opportunity. Come on, man, don't do
13 that to us, man. We ain't that
14 stupid. Don't do that to us man.
15 Don't do that to us.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON: Thank you.

18 PUBLIC SPEAKER PITTS:

19 Don't use us like that
20 because that's what they doing.

21 Thank you.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

23 JOHNSON:

24 Thank you very -- thank

1 you very much for that very
2 passionate testimony. Thank all of
3 you. At this moment I'm going to
4 acknowledge Councilmember Jeffrey J.
5 Young.

6 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:

7 Thank you. I have a question for
8 Ms. Bonilla. Just, you were
9 alluding to, I guess, Market East.
10 Could you just, you know, go a
11 little bit deeper into what you
12 think some of the current issues are
13 with Market East?

14 PUBLIC SPEAKER BONILLA:

15 Some of the issues right now, and I
16 also for the record, I'm a
17 Pennsylvania real estate agent that
18 deals with commercial as well as
19 residential real estate. So for the
20 record, I did not state earlier that
21 I am a Pennsylvania real estate
22 agent that deals with commercial
23 real estate as well as residential
24 real estate.

1 I think some of the
2 issues in Market East, that were
3 touched on earlier prior to our
4 panel sessions, parking. There are
5 a lot of, again, you may step out
6 for a second, but there's a lot of
7 ambiguity when it comes to numbers.
8 People come here and give testimony
9 and/or speak, but they don't
10 actually have the data in front of
11 them.

12 Each panel they keep
13 saying we don't have numbers, right?
14 I think the biggest part with not
15 just Market East as far as the data,
16 I think it's kind of the problem
17 here is what's displayed here about
18 not giving numbers here. It's not
19 something that has been done, but in
20 economic development, we can survey
21 and actually write those plans. So
22 you can't necessarily say -- it's
23 like statistics. The numbers are
24 not facts, but you can actually try

1 to give an account. I also serve as
2 well -- I actually am an MBA
3 candidate at Georgetown University
4 McDonough.

5 So I actually deal with
6 statistics and data all the time.
7 So a lot of that's not given here or
8 they don't have the data to say,
9 give me -- can you give me a second
10 Council President and or members of
11 Council, so I can actually give that
12 -- give that information. So one of
13 the major things again is parking,
14 as well as those residents that live
15 here.

16 We see people that might
17 be coming here for colleges.
18 Philadelphia, we have some of the
19 best colleges in the world, even
20 though I'm a native New Jersey, I
21 live here in Germantown, serve as a
22 block captain. So I'm also -- I
23 deal with a lot of -- I'm the past
24 RCO secretary for Baton Hill. So I

1 have done a lot in the economic
2 space. So what I see is that in
3 Market East, a lot of -- and as
4 stated before earlier in session,
5 that the community leaders are not
6 involved with planning and they're
7 not brought to the table. That's
8 what I'm seeing currently in the
9 lay. Uh-oh, Council President, I'm
10 sorry.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

12 JOHNSON: The chair recognizes the
13 gentleman from the 1st Councilmanic
14 District. Just for a point of
15 information regarding, how many
16 meetings have you had and how long
17 has this process you have been
18 working on, as it relates to
19 addressing the issues, as it relates
20 to the constituents that you
21 actually represent in the 1st
22 Councilmanic District, which
23 includes the Chinatown community.

24 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:

1 Thank you, Mr. President.

2 We've -- it's been meetings for a
3 little over two years, on this
4 process, and with, Chinatown
5 community, we had over 32 meetings
6 which was verified by PCDC in their
7 testimony of, he said dozens of
8 meetings.

9 And we also have met with
10 not only the Chinatown community,
11 but at least close to a hundred
12 meetings altogether with all the
13 community stakeholders as far as the
14 people involved with Washington
15 West, with Jefferson Hospital,
16 except the Midtown Village, and
17 Center City District, Reading
18 Terminal, Convention Center. A Lot
19 of other stakeholders that were
20 there that compromise the number of
21 meetings and discussions that we've
22 had along the way before,
23 legislation was proposed by the
24 administration.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON: And for the record, what
3 are the purpose of the meetings that
4 you were actually having in terms of
5 you, your staff being there, what
6 was the purpose?

7 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:

8 To discuss the challenges and
9 concerns of the nearby residents,
10 and/or the support of arena proposal
11 that was going to be put at the
12 gallery site between 10th and 11th
13 and Market.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: And for the record, what
16 have you done with the actual
17 information you actually received?

18 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:

19 Well, as we received
20 them, we -- as part of the
21 negotiations after the legislation
22 was proposed, we met with the
23 Council President's Office and the
24 Mayor's Office to go over some

1 changes in that proposal and modify
2 -- modification of the CBA to
3 include what we call Arena District
4 and also to introduce additional,
5 what we're calling companion
6 legislation to look at cultural
7 aspects of Chinatown to create an
8 overlay and still working on a
9 proposal for a tax incremental
10 finance legislation to address the
11 concerns that we heard during that
12 process.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON:

15 And last but not least
16 for the record, are you willing to
17 still continue to meet with the
18 various stakeholders and groups from
19 Chinatown and surrounding community
20 regarding the actual legislation
21 that's proposed for you that you're
22 actually sponsoring?

23 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:

24 Yes. We met -- we had a

1 public meeting as late as Monday,
2 Monday this -- Monday this week --
3 last week. No, Monday this week, we
4 met to discuss other activities on
5 the legislation, other proposals and
6 possible compromises, and have
7 continued to have meetings with all
8 the stakeholders, ongoing even
9 through this process. Not only
10 during this hearing process here,
11 but during times when we're not at
12 this hearing.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON:

15 All right. Thank you
16 very much, Councilmember Mark
17 Squilla. I want to thank everybody
18 for your very, very informative and
19 passionate testimony. And with that
20 being said, I'm going to ask for
21 Mr. Christmas to please call the
22 next panel.

23 CHIEF CLERK: Chris

24 Mullins of McGillin's Ale House, and

1 Fergus Carey of Fergus. Please come
2 forward.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: State your name for the
5 record and please begin your
6 testimony.

7 PUBLIC SPEAKER CAREY:

8 Fergus Carey. My name is Fergus
9 Carey. I am a business owner in
10 Philadelphia for the last 30 years
11 or so. I am -- I'm also the
12 president of the Board of Midtown
13 Village Merchants Association, and
14 this is my associate Chris Mullins
15 from McGillin's Ale House, and he is
16 also on the board of Midtown Village
17 Merchants Association. We are here
18 today. We are -- we are a business
19 organization and we are in favor of
20 the arena coming into 11th and
21 Market. We are pro-business and
22 therefore we felt that it was the
23 right decision to make.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1 JOHNSON:

2 That's your testimony.

3 That was quick. Go ahead, sir.

4 PUBLIC SPEAKER MULLINS:

5 I'm ready. Short and
6 sweet.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Please state your name.

9 PUBLIC SPEAKER MULLINS:

10 Short and sweet.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

12 JOHNSON: Please state your name.

13 PUBLIC SPEAKER MULLINS:

14 Sure.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON:

17 Said a whole lot without
18 saying a whole lot.

19 PUBLIC SPEAKER MULLINS:

20 Yeah.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

22 JOHNSON: State your name for the
23 record, sir.

24 PUBLIC SPEAKER MULLINS:

1 Sure. It's Christopher
2 Mullins, Jr. Good afternoon and
3 thank you for allowing us the
4 opportunity to address City Council.
5 I'm the third-generation owner of
6 McGillin's Olde Ale House.
7 McGillin's is Philadelphia's oldest
8 tavern. It was founded in 1860 by
9 William McGillin. My grandfather
10 and his brother purchased McGillin's
11 in 1958.

12 And in 1993, with the
13 opening of the Convention Center, my
14 parents saw the opportunity for
15 Center City, and decided to purchase
16 the bar, take it over and, you know,
17 see where things go. And I've been
18 with them since 2006.

19 The Convention Center
20 changed the face of Center City,
21 many for the good. However, there
22 are still challenges to the
23 building, but at the end of the day
24 as predicted, it brought thousands

1 of out-of-towners and locals into
2 the core of the city. We remember
3 what our neighborhood and must --
4 much of Center City was like, prior
5 to the opening of the Convention
6 Center.

7 It has spurred new
8 hotels, restaurants, sidewalks are
9 filled with visitors, and it's a
10 much more vibrant place to be. But
11 we also do know that the Convention
12 Center is not enough to sustain
13 Center City.

14 For 50 years, we've
15 watched the slow decline of Market
16 Street, where once five department
17 stores lined the avenue. Macy's is
18 the last one, and that we hear is
19 closing too, potentially. News of
20 Giant closing has rattled our
21 nerves, and retail, we know
22 everywhere is in decline. But
23 what's going to fill Market East
24 because it's not going to be retail.

1 There are so many holes
2 along the blocks of -- from 6th
3 Street to 13th along Market, and
4 we've been told too many times over
5 the years that things will turn
6 around. Yet we still wait. And
7 today we're debating over a
8 privately funded massive project
9 that will bring millions of dollars
10 in revenue to our inner core,
11 provide jobs and drive traffic into
12 an area that swirly needs the
13 activity.

14 Plus this project comes
15 with no private republic financing,
16 which is unheard of from what I
17 understand. We realize the effect
18 on Chinatown is a concern and we
19 share those concerns, but we know
20 provisions can be put in place to
21 protect this historic neighborhood.
22 However, the benefit to all of
23 Center City needs to be considered.

24 As far as traffic goes,

1 this weekend we have the
2 Philadelphia Marathon. For two
3 days, traffic is disrupted in all of
4 Center City from every corner, and
5 yet somehow life goes on and people
6 take public transportation.

7 The Flower Show affects
8 more people per day than the arena
9 will hold in total -- in total
10 though it is mitigated by the use of
11 public transportation. People from
12 all over the region during that
13 Flower Show come downtown and enjoy
14 the highlights the city has to
15 offer. The city's alive. It's
16 energized and an experience that
17 people take back to their
18 communities and say how wonderful
19 Philadelphia is.

20 This project will not fix
21 all of our problems, but it will be
22 a shot in the arm. It'll bring
23 people into the core instead of
24 concentrating all of the business in

1 South Philadelphia. The jobs -- the
2 jobs that this will bring will also
3 allow cleaner streets and safer
4 streets. My family, our employees,
5 and our community urge you to
6 support this once in a lifetime
7 project which our city so sorely
8 deserves. Thank you so much.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON:

11 Thank you.
12 Councilmember, Mike Driscoll.

13 COUNCILMEMBER DRISCOLL:

14 Thank you, Mr. President and
15 Mr. Carey and Mr. Mullins, I want to
16 thank you for being here. I was in
17 your industry for 17 years. People
18 come in, see your place packed, they
19 think you're a millionaire. They
20 don't realize it's a seven-day a
21 week proposition, that you have big
22 payrolls, that you have the
23 insurance going up, government's
24 usually coming after you for how

1 many permits you have to pay every
2 year.

3 I understand the plate of
4 the small businessman and I'm just
5 happy that you guys are not only
6 worried about your own
7 establishments, that you have this
8 organization that are worried about
9 other establishments in Center City.
10 It's this working together that I
11 think is so important, that makes us
12 the city and neighborhoods and the
13 City of Brotherly Love that some
14 would argue you to our competition.
15 I would argue that a rising tide
16 lifts all boats and hopefully this
17 project can do that.

18 And I will say this, we
19 need you over these next couple
20 years to give us input and
21 Councilmember Landau will be working
22 with you with regard to 2026. And I
23 know she's been doing a great job
24 with all of the establishments for

1 outdoor dining, what extended
2 permits we're going to need for 2026
3 when we have the FIFA World Cup. So
4 I just want to tell you, we're not
5 always the enemy. We're here to
6 help. And that when we can be
7 helpful over the next couple years,
8 please use us. Thank you.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON:

11 Thank you. Just for the
12 record, where are your two
13 businesses located?

14 PUBLIC SPEAKER CAREY:

15 We're both in Midtown
16 Village Merchants, in middle of
17 Midtown Village. Fergie's Pub is at
18 1214 San Street. McGillin's is on
19 Drury Street. We are basically a
20 spit from this place right now.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

22 JOHNSON:

23 Okay. All right. Thank
24 you very much. Well, thank you for

1 taking time out of your schedule and
2 being here today.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKER CAREY:

4 Thank you very much.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

6 JOHNSON: Last and final panel,
7 Mr. Christmas. Can you call the
8 panel please?

9 CHIEF CLERK: Bobby
10 Zhang, Lauren Lowe, Yoojin Park and
11 David Acosta, please come forward.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

13 JOHNSON:

14 Thank you. Just please
15 state your name and begin the
16 testimony.

17 PUBLIC SPEAKER ZHANG:

18 Hi, my name is Bobby Zhang. I'm the
19 honorary president of the Hoyu
20 Association in Philadelphia. I'm
21 also the Secretary General of
22 Pennsylvania United Chinese
23 Coalition. I immigrated to the
24 United States in 1982. At that

1 time, I was living in Washington,
2 D.C. I moved to Philadelphia in
3 1995.

4 The CBA introduced by
5 Councilmember Squilla is a terrible
6 one. Chinatown was never consulted,
7 and it's a pitiful deal for the
8 entire city. The D.C Chinatown is
9 on the brink of disappearance. What
10 happened over there foreshadows what
11 would happen to Philadelphia's
12 Chinatown should the arena get to
13 build.

14 The fight of the DC
15 Chinatown community against
16 displacement intensified after the
17 Capital One Arena was built.
18 However, the community that used to
19 have thousands of residents now has
20 only less than 300 remained with
21 only 15 business owned by -- Asian
22 owned. And to that city, that was
23 economic death zone with low foot
24 traffic, with dozens of empty vacant

1 business, as well as languishing
2 chain stores.

3 So let what happened to
4 the D.C. Chinatown be a warning.
5 It's a warning that shows what would
6 happen to a community if a developer
7 were to allow to develop that
8 results in displacement of
9 residents. And the warning that
10 once the local business will chase
11 out, the entire community will lose
12 its unique characteristic, and what
13 would happen then.

14 The Chinatown currently
15 is in danger. Our business -- our
16 community relies on small businesses
17 with many of them provide services.
18 But because of the pandemic, our
19 community have suffered great
20 effect. Many businesses did not
21 survive during the pandemic. We saw
22 many families have lost their
23 lifetime -- lifelong savings.

24 In addition, our

1 community is facing hate due to the
2 pandemic. In 2022, we just started
3 to recover. What we need from the
4 city is support and help. We need
5 someone to recognize the value of
6 our community and support us as we
7 start to rebuild, especially in the
8 face of anti-Asian violence.

9 However, we get this arena, that
10 will destroy us. It's only silence
11 from elected officials in the face
12 of our concern at their inaction.

13 This arena can be built
14 in any place. No matter what is
15 built, there will be the same jobs
16 or even more when it's built
17 somewhere else. They already tried
18 to build one on the waterfront, but
19 they were rejected. Why would we
20 accept a proposal that will
21 disproportionately affect our
22 community?

23 Chinatown is a working
24 class community of color that has

1 been long marginalized. This feels
2 like yet another instance of anti-
3 Asian hate. We are still trying to
4 just survive. Thirty percent of our
5 restaurant business rely on takeout
6 and delivery services. All of our
7 customers need to be able to access
8 Chinatown in an easy manner and then
9 also need affordable parking.

10 To countless Asian
11 American and immigrant family,
12 Chinatown is not just a place for
13 dining. It's our spiritual,
14 cultural, and historical center.
15 Our community won't survive the six
16 years of construction and Chinatown
17 won't even be around to see the
18 arena open. You cannot mitigate an
19 existential threat. You cannot
20 offer community benefits that will
21 pay for our history, our culture, or
22 our relationships.

23 The so-called economic
24 study has ignored the hundreds of

1 business, their contribution to the
2 economy. It also ignores the danger
3 this small business face. It seems
4 like our pain, our cause, seems to
5 be meaningless to this city. But
6 after 150 years of hard work, we
7 earned the right to stay here. We
8 are one of the oldest communities in
9 this city, and it's also -- it's
10 also an indispensable part of the
11 city's culture and history.

12 We are calling on all
13 Philadelphians, who have a heart to
14 oppose this project, to support our
15 community, to show that our
16 community is a treasure asset of
17 this city, join us and to fight
18 against those predatory developers.
19 End this now. No arena in
20 Chinatown. Thank you.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
22 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.
23 Please state your name for the
24 record and please begin your

1 testimony.

2 PUBLIC SPEAKER ACOSTA:

3 Thank you, President Johnson and

4 thank you members of City Council.

5 I'll keep my comments brief because

6 I know you've been here all day. My

7 name is David Acosta. I'm a poet, a

8 writer, a community organizer, a

9 cultural worker, creator, and a

10 lifelong resident of the city of

11 Philadelphia. And I am here to

12 speak against Bill 24966. I'm part

13 of the arts and culture community, a

14 community still reeling from the

15 financial impact of the COVID

16 Pandemic.

17 You need to know that our

18 theaters and cultural venues will

19 lose money if the arena goes up.

20 The Wilma Theater, the Kimmel

21 Center, all of these theaters and

22 other arts organizations that bring

23 in millions of dollars to the city

24 every year, will lose money because

1 the arena's traffic and construction
2 will black out customers.
3 Restaurants will lose money. We
4 can't even afford to fund SEPTA.
5 How can we afford to pay for this
6 arena?

7 You have on your desk a
8 list of 1,000 signatures from
9 cultural workers, creators,
10 executive directors of cultural
11 organizations in the city, and
12 signatures are still coming in. You
13 also have on your desk, a copy of an
14 anthology that I had the pleasure of
15 editing along with Mia Kang on the
16 meaning of Chinatown to the 44 poets
17 who contributed to the anthology,
18 the oldest poet being in their late
19 sixties, the youngest poet being a
20 9-year-old Chinese American boy.

21 I think that the arena,
22 and these people who signed this
23 petition see their livelihoods as
24 threatened. We know the economic

1 study inflated the jobs and revenue
2 numbers of the arena. Approving it
3 would destroy thousands of jobs and
4 replace them with very little. The
5 arena also poses an existential
6 threat to the Gayborhood, Washington
7 Square West, the Loft District,
8 another nearby neighborhoods, Old
9 City, Queen Village, Bella Vista,
10 and Hawthorne. The great deal of
11 the mayor is offering is great only
12 for 76 Place billionaire developers
13 whose lawyers drafted it.

14 It is a bad deal for the
15 rest of us and for the cultural
16 institutions that will be impacted
17 through six years of construction
18 and subsequent gridlock. The
19 project will also destroy one of our
20 city's cultural treasures, Center
21 City's last remaining working class
22 community of color.

23 History will judge you
24 harshly if we green light this

1 project destroying a cultural
2 enclave of great value while
3 financially harming perhaps a
4 revocable important cultural
5 institutions which makes us a class
6 world city.

7 To those of you who stand
8 in opposition to the building of the
9 arena, thank you for asking the hard
10 questions on behalf of the citizens
11 you represent. We call on all of
12 you to exercise true leadership and
13 say "no." Support the community's
14 right to self-determination. Honor
15 Philadelphia's identity as a city of
16 neighborhoods.

17 In conclusion, finally
18 consider the negative impact this
19 proposed arena could have on the
20 culinary and gastronomic richness of
21 our city. People come to Chinatown
22 for some of the best Asian food to
23 be had anywhere in this country.
24 Many of these are small family owned

1 businesses whose survival is
2 threatened by six years of
3 construction.

4 And subsequently, the
5 rise in affordability for housing
6 which follows gentrification.
7 Please say no to this project and
8 address the real problems impacting
9 quality of life for us all. Better
10 schools, affordable housing, clean
11 streets, and a fully functioning
12 public transportation system. Thank
13 you.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: Thank you. Please state
16 your name for the record and please
17 begin your testimony.

18 PUBLIC SPEAKER LOWE:

19 Good evening. My name is Lauren
20 Lowe. I'm a writer and a teacher
21 and a District 3 constituent with
22 family roots in Philadelphia's
23 Chinatown. My father and his six
24 siblings all grew up in the

1 neighborhood, or as we say in
2 Cantonese, [CANTONESE LANGUAGE],
3 born and raised. As I've become an
4 adult and moved around for school
5 and for work, Chinatown and Philly
6 have always remained home. A
7 longtime member of the Philadelphia
8 Suns. I now also coach the girls 14
9 under team on Saturday mornings at
10 the Crane Tower.

11 Now, 71 years old --
12 sorry for putting your age out there
13 like that, dad. My father, like
14 most fathers, has a lot of stories,
15 but there are two days in particular
16 that he recalls with extra clarity.
17 The first was from October 1976,
18 when he was at Passing, Sporting
19 Goods, 8th & Arch, which in a
20 classic old school Philly Way did
21 the uniforms for the professional
22 teams in the city and the Holy
23 Redeemer School teams where he went
24 to school. And he found out that

1 day that Dr. J was being traded to
2 the 76ers. We all know how that
3 went.

4 The other days from three
5 years before that, in August 1973,
6 he was 20 years old and an early
7 phone call woke him from his sister.
8 They're trying to knock down Holy
9 Redeemer. She said, you have to get
10 over there. It was raining light
11 that morning. He phoned his best
12 friend, grabbed his sister's wide
13 burn hat and sprinted to 10th
14 Street.

15 Bulldozers had already
16 begun demolishing row homes while
17 the neighborhood was still sleeping.
18 Without hesitation, he climbed to
19 top a mountain of rubble with his
20 friend and neighbors. You've
21 probably seen that photo, if you're
22 familiar with the Vine Street
23 Expressway fight. It's black and
24 white and there's the small

1 determined group staring down
2 cranes, a banner beside them,
3 reading homes, not highways.

4 To this day, my father
5 actually doesn't consider him an
6 activist, though I've spent many
7 occasions trying to pin the title on
8 him. We don't always share the same
9 politics, and I kept thinking this
10 was a place where we could overlap,
11 and I could get him to admit that I
12 was right about something. But as
13 I've gotten older, I've started to
14 see his point of view and really
15 appreciate. Can you imagine how
16 much you must love a place to put
17 your body on the line like that?
18 This is my lineage.

19 I'm speaking to you today
20 with equal parts pride and pain.
21 It's an incredible opportunity to
22 advocate for our community alongside
23 our elders, and yet I'm also
24 frequently aware of how often

1 they've had to do this over and over
2 again in the course of their
3 lifetimes. I'm also aware that this
4 fight is not just about Chinatown.
5 It's a fight that's held over and
6 over in low income communities
7 across the city and in neighborhoods
8 of color.

9 At the same time, when
10 the Vine Street Expressway fight was
11 happening in that same era, there
12 were so-called Urban Renewal
13 Projects that raised the Black
14 Bottom neighborhood in the 60s, and
15 where university adjacent
16 development continues to drive
17 displacement at an increasingly
18 rapid pace today.

19 To the note about
20 community meetings with Chinatown, I
21 would just like to flag that while I
22 appreciate the very specific number
23 offered by Councilman Squilla about
24 32 meetings. PCDC was actually here

1 yesterday and John Chin remains on
2 record standing in opposition to
3 this arena. And furthermore, he
4 said that while they've had many
5 conversations, the current CBA
6 actually does not reflect anything
7 close to what's been discussed about
8 what's needed for Chinatown's
9 protections.

10 So I'd like to just
11 remind everyone of the axiom. It's
12 not about quantity, it's about
13 quality. And while you may be in
14 meetings often, which in the last
15 year or two years, we've only
16 received 72 hours' notice, I think
17 the last one we found out about on
18 Thursday or Friday for a Monday
19 meeting, are you actually listening
20 to us or them?

21 Finally, I'm struck by
22 this building slogan that we often
23 hear. I can get with a good chant.
24 I grew up playing sports. But what

1 are we committed to building? Are
2 they flashy developments that
3 promise a quick fix silver bullet
4 solution with nearsighted promises
5 of revitalization? Are we committed
6 to building up our communities
7 through serious investment and
8 engagement and long-term
9 comprehensive visions for planning?
10 I fear the looming scale the
11 proposed arena has prematurely
12 narrowed the conversation about
13 what's possible there, not only for
14 the future of Market East, but for
15 the city as a whole.

16 Facing school closures,
17 accepted death spiral, affordable
18 housing crisis, and a gun violence
19 epidemic. It is true that we need
20 real change, and that does include a
21 re-imagining of the blocks along
22 Market East. But do we really
23 believe that a few billionaire
24 owners, who by the way, are

1 responsible for a star-filled roster
2 that's two and 11 right now and
3 hasn't made it out of the second
4 round in many, many years, are
5 really the best that we have to
6 offer.

7 As we approach the
8 bicentennial in 250 years of
9 Philadelphia, we have to ask
10 ourself, what will our legacy be?
11 What do you want the city's legacy
12 to be in another 250 years? And
13 perhaps more pressingly here for
14 Council today, what will your role
15 be in creating that legacy?

16 I do believe, perhaps
17 naively that a better, more
18 equitable city is possible for all
19 Philadelphians. These don't have to
20 just be empty words that we're
21 exchanging here. You can take
22 action, you can vote against the
23 arena, you can put forth a real
24 request for proposals and bring

1 community stakeholders to the table
2 throughout the process to help drive
3 the process. We just need the
4 courage, vision, and collaboration
5 to fight for the city we want.
6 Thank you.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Thank you.

9 PUBLIC SPEAKER PARK:

10 Good afternoon or rather evening.
11 My name is Yoojin Park. I'm a
12 social worker, Temple grad and queer
13 performer. I perform as the only
14 Asian king in the city and was
15 recognized for my art and activism
16 in PGN's most influential queer
17 community leaders.

18 In addition to starting
19 my own non-profit for Queer Youth of
20 Color, I'm also a part of No Arena
21 Gayborhood, a community group made
22 by and for queer people citywide who
23 are in solidarity with Chinatown.
24 We're backed by almost 2,000 queer

1 folks from all over Greater
2 Philadelphia that have signed our
3 petition against the arena. We
4 support Chinatown and all
5 communities harmed by predatory
6 development.

7 I want to talk about two
8 main things today; local history and
9 local democracy. I'll start with
10 the history. Others have given
11 examples of predatory development in
12 Philly, but no one's mentioned yet
13 how Chinatown and the gay were
14 practically connected once and how
15 predatory development harmed both.

16 I'm talking about the
17 Convention Center, which displaced
18 Chinatown families and erased an
19 entire group of Black-owned gay
20 businesses on Filbert and Arch. We
21 still deal with a lot of racism in
22 the Gayborhood, and a huge part of
23 the reason is that half of it was
24 literally erased.

1 Queer people of color are
2 pushed out time and time again.
3 This month, two minority owned and
4 oriented Gayborhood businesses got
5 priced out. It's not a coincidence
6 that both these owners of these
7 businesses oppose the arena because
8 they know what it's like to have to
9 fight for space and capital as a
10 minority within a minority. It's
11 not surprising when you hear other
12 people talk about the Gayborhood or
13 try to call it Midtown Village
14 without actually ever engaging with
15 queer folks of color or our
16 performance community.

17 Level Up, my home bar and
18 the only Black owned bar in the
19 neighborhood is closing next month.
20 That loss is more tangible to me
21 than anyone else here because I'm in
22 the chain reaction. Ken is losing
23 his space in the Gayborhood. The
24 folks working for him are losing

1 their jobs. I'm losing my home bar
2 and so many show opportunities, and
3 once again, we're losing precious
4 rare community space for queer folks
5 of color. In 2020, Midwood
6 Development, who destroyed the 12th
7 Street gym, first whitewashed the
8 mural of Gloria Cassar in the middle
9 of the night without any consent
10 from the community.

11 They also made promises
12 about preserving a cultural treasure
13 and proposed a so-called Public Art
14 Bonus to appease people. And of
15 course didn't keep the promises.
16 Doesn't that give you deja vu? Just
17 like Midwood, this arena developer
18 doesn't care about a democratic
19 process with the community. They
20 don't even talk to us.

21 Their idea of community
22 benefits is stuff like free
23 basketball tickets for the same
24 school district that has to close

1 schools doesn't have AC, and
2 literally kids are breathing in
3 asbestos, but they're about to get a
4 \$400 million tax break.

5 We don't expect a self-
6 interested developer to have a
7 democratic process. They don't work
8 for the taxpayers, but City Council
9 does. And you should be working on
10 urgent things like schools and SEPTA
11 and you should be the strongest
12 guardrail ensuring a democratic
13 process.

14 But instead, we have an
15 undemocratic process to the point
16 where you're physically silencing
17 free speech. I'm talking about what
18 happened here on October 24th, as
19 you may know from the ACLU's warning
20 letter yesterday. All right. Two
21 cops on behalf of City Council
22 dragged Debbie way out of here. She
23 told you about it, but I was there
24 too.

1 I followed them to
2 document it on video. And as I
3 joined them on -- and as I joined
4 them on the elevator, one cop,
5 literally, hit me without any verbal
6 warning. The other cop pulled out a
7 baton and swung it at me twice. All
8 for coming here as a citizen of
9 Philadelphia and to use my first
10 amendment right for free speech.

11 I came here again today
12 to testify in front of you all with
13 no guarantee that my safety would be
14 protected today. This is just to
15 show how undemocratic this arena
16 process has become. You literally
17 have -- you literally are
18 manhandling a 67-year-old woman.
19 And I just -- I just wanted to come
20 here and ask you, what kind of
21 precedent are you trying to set the
22 arena aside? Do the people of
23 Philadelphia really feel safe to
24 come in here and share their

1 opinion?

2 It took a lot of courage
3 for me to come here, to come back
4 into these four walls and into this
5 room. And I really think that you
6 all should think about that and
7 think about the 70% of Philadelphia
8 that really does not want this
9 arena. Thank you.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

11 JOHNSON:

12 Thank you for your
13 testimony. Any questions or
14 comments from members of the
15 committee? Hearing none. This
16 concludes the business for the
17 Committee of the Whole today.

18 I recognize Councilman
19 Mark Squilla for a motion to recess
20 the public hearing to Thursday,
21 November the 21st, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

22 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:

23 So moved.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1 JOHNSON:

2 It has a moving, properly
3 seconded that the Committee of the
4 Whole will be recessed until
5 Thursday, November the 21st at
6 6:00 p.m. All those in favor
7 signify by saying aye.

8 Councilmembers: Aye.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON:

11 Those opposed?

12 (No response.)

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON: The ayes have it. The
15 motion carries that the Committee of
16 the Whole stands in recess until
17 Thursday, November the 21st, 2024 at
18 6:00 p.m.

19 Thank you everybody for
20 your participation.

21 (Proceedings concluded.)

22

23

24

1 C E R T I F I C A T I O N

2

3 I hereby certify that the proceedings and
4 evidence are contained fully and accurately in the
5 notes taken by me of the above case, and this copy is a
6 correct transcript of the same.

7

8

9 *Samanda J. Rios*

10

Samanda J. Rios

11

Court Reporter
Notary Public of PA & DE

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