



May 9, 2018

Pomona Planning Commission  
Pomona City Hall  
505 Garey Ave.  
Pomona, CA 91766

Dear Chairperson Juarez, Vice Chairperson Ursua, Commissioner Grajeda, Commissioner Arias, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Hemming and Commissioner Ramos:

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to share Fairplex's concerns regarding the City Council's recommended amendments to the F-Zone land use zoning ordinance. We have been looking forward to this opportunity since the adoption of the revised F-Zone language by the majority of the City Council in November.

As written, the amendments cripple Fairplex's ability to compete with other venues outside of Pomona. The requirements for conditional use permits (CUP) and environmental impact reports (EIR) for events and investment in capital would be time consuming, expensive and are, at their heart, designed to reduce and eliminate our ability to fulfill our mission. The fact is that this proposed legislation would risk losing many of the traditions that Fairplex produces each year, and almost certainly prevent future traditions from evolving.

**We ask that you reject, today, the revised language that has been sent to you and restart this process with an open-mind and clarity of purpose.**

A loss of events and revenue harms the entire city, particularly as it seeks to build its economic base to increase revenues. Fairplex paid \$2.7 million in annual tax revenue for Pomona along with \$5.3 million generated in annual taxes from Fairplex-related activities. These are direct benefits from our programming. Fairplex-related business supports an estimated 514 full-time equivalent jobs and provides an estimated economic output of \$58.2 million to the city. Any limitations on Fairplex activities would begin to diminish revenues and economic outputs; therefore, impacting the fiscal benefits received by the city.

In addition, the amendments are contradictory to the City's General Plan. The General Plan envisions more activity and development at Fairplex – a vision Fairplex has pursued with the approval of the City and the County. Instead, the proposed F-Zone changes would not only undercut Fairplex planning for future events, activities and developments, they would prohibit activities that have been on the Fairplex campus for decades. The changes would also hurt the City's investment in the Sheraton Fairplex Conference Center.

Fairplex has been denied a voice in the development of the F-Zone amendments. When the City Council formed the Ad Hoc Committee to prepare a report on the F-Zone, input from all parties, including the public, was expected. However, we were not invited to discuss the amendments prior to the Ad Hoc Committee's approval of the report.

Nor were perspectives sought from the County of Los Angeles, which owns the land leased by Fairplex. I followed up the November City Council action with a letter that same month – I've yet to receive a response.

Given the lack of transparency throughout this process, it is not clear what land use problems the proposed F-Zone amendments seek to address. During the last year, Fairplex has made every effort to be a better neighbor, strengthen relationships and most important, to listen. Our goal has been to respond in real time to the issues raised by the community. We launched a Neighborhood Response System that offers neighbors in close proximity to Fairplex a 24/7 telephone and text service that connects directly to a staff member. In 2017, only 16 calls were received, the majority of those to ask information-based questions, such as Fairplex's hours.

At the Board's direction we launched an inclusive strategic planning process, where we held over 10 sessions on all aspects of our organization. Over 500 members of our community attended at least one of the sessions – with well over 100 at each one. Everyone was welcomed no matter their point of view, support or frustration.

We have also reached out multiple times to the community group, Protect Our Neighborhood, which has a stated mission of "Having a voice at the table alongside Fairplex. Reminding the Fairplex that we are the neighborhood." We asked to meet with the group or address one of its neighborhood meetings. Unfortunately, we have been told that we are not welcome.

We also invited PON to participate in our Strategic Plan process. The Strategic Plan meeting on Neighborhood, Housing and Transportation was held in the evening to accommodate PON. I appreciate that some members of PON did attend. Based on what has been shared at our strategic planning sessions, in public testimony at various meeting and social media, their issues are specific to governance, transparency, financial management of the organization, executive compensation, more revenue for the city, EDM festivals and content of our programming. While these issues are important to address, and under my administration we have, none of them are relevant to land use.

*It is inappropriate to regulate or seek influence over the management of a private organization using the authority of zoning as leverage.*

As just one example of the negative impacts, the NHRA has stated it will leave the Pomona Raceway if the city requires an EIR and CUP for each of its events. Another example: the Asian American Expo. Each year the Expo draws a diverse audience to enjoy the largest Asian festival in the U.S. We are proud to host significant cultural events like this, and would hate to lose

them due to unrealistic requirements. Additionally, more than a dozen events bring in 400,000 people to the City of Pomona, outside of the LA County Fair. What a loss to the city if those visitors went elsewhere. Plus, we lose the ability to establish new traditions through the potential of lost business.

As a Commission you have been given the difficult task of sorting this out. We are prepared to address any and all land-use related issues through an objective and transparent process. The process so far has resulted in a red-lined F-zone without direction on its intent or objectives. The confusion it has created has surfaced concerns from our partners and has given our competitors the ability to peel off new ones.

We understand the need to go through the EIR and CUP process for certain events. Our vision is consistent with Pomona's General Plan. I am confident that we – the City, the community and Fairplex – can come to an agreement on a fair reasonable outcome to ensure that the neighborhood impacts of Fairplex operations are better mitigated without sapping our ability to serve our community and region as a driver of economic opportunity, a showcase of the best of Southern California and an educational partner.

Further, the Strategic Plan, when presented, will show that we are listening to the community. I heard Fairplex had lost its focus. The Strategic Plan process included frank discussions with neighbors, business partners, the City and the County. Through this we built a common understanding of this incredible and complex organization. Fairplex is a place that brings people together. We are part of people's lives and memories. Together, we've identified a path forward.

The next time I am before the Planning Commission, I hope it is to present Fairplex's new mission and vision.

Again, I ask that you reject the revised language to the F-Zone as submitted and initiate a new process based on your governance and time frame. This proposal has been flawed from the outset with a predetermined outcome that does not take into consideration the best interest of the city, Fairplex or our community.

Thank you,

Miguel A. Santana  
President & CEO Fairplex