



Opinion: Oakland A's plans won't hinder port's future expansion

Proposed ballpark development would be better use for Howard Terminal, where cargo vessels haven't docked since 2013

By Danny Wan, Executive Director, Port of Oakland

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Cargo vessels haven't docked at the Port of Oakland's Howard Terminal since 2013. It's too small to handle the 1,200-foot-long container ships that now dominate the shipping industry. Its waters aren't even deep enough to accommodate these mega-ships.

The Oakland seaport is growing. With the addition of Oakland Army Base land in 2006, the port has significant room. The port moves the equivalent of 2.4 million 20-foot cargo containers annually, and we are continuing to add capacity. This growth is planned to accommodate a changing Oakland and shifts in the shipping industry.

Shipping is not the best use for Howard Terminal, a 50-acre site near Jack London Square at the southeast corner of the port. This has led the port to begin negotiations to lease the site for non-maritime use. On the other side of the bargaining table: the Oakland Athletics baseball club. The A's propose to build a 35,000-seat stadium and housing there.

Today, Howard Terminal is a short-term parking lot for containers and some big-rigs, a temporary container storage depot and a training facility for dockworkers. These operations could be moved elsewhere.

The proposed ballpark development would provide significant returns for everyone. It would bring desperately needed housing to the community and boost businesses in and around Jack London Square. (The square, by the way, is also Port of Oakland land.) It would also bring visitors to the waterfront, a stated responsibility of the port.

The city of Oakland is working on a community benefits package for the A's project that includes affordable housing and open space. The port is committed to strong local hiring and contracting policies. And the city and port are responding with plans to reorder traffic patterns to avoid gridlock.

The port is committed to collaborating with the shipping industry to protect and grow Oakland's maritime sector. The use of Howard Terminal for the Oakland A's ballpark, housing, offices and retail will not hurt the operations or business of our shipping partners.

Seaport growth will not stall with the A's project. We understand the concern, particularly in light of global supply-chain issues. Ports worldwide buckled in 2021 under the weight of explosive trade growth. Critical shipments went undelivered.

Howard Terminal's seaport acreage is not being used for shipping. Using it for a stadium and housing would not alter the port's growth trajectory.

There's a 120-acre marine terminal at the other end of the port property available for added expansion. The port has the capacity to grow from its current 2.4 million annual container volume to 4 million without Howard Terminal. At the current rate of growth, Oakland might not hit that 4 million growth target until 2050.

The port wants to grow responsibly. It is looking at investing in the more effective and efficient use of current capacity at the 1,300-acre footprint of the Oakland seaport.

Toward that goal, the port has undertaken a collaborative planning process involving industry, transportation and other public agencies, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), neighboring communities and the public.

Key planning criteria include investment in quality jobs and workforce, evolving industry needs, environmental and financial sustainability, infrastructure, city-port land-use planning and creation of a zero-emissions port. The proposal for Howard Terminal fits within those parameters.

There's more to be decided before the Howard Terminal plan is finalized. BCDC is scheduled to vote on the proposal in June. The City Council must still give final approval. Then the project goes to the Board of Port

Commissioners to consider real estate agreements and other final approvals.

Despite the changes at the Oakland seaport, the port remains committed to continued growth in its 95-year-old maritime business to benefit everyone in the region.