

# SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS TIMES

## Oakland's loss of A's sparks high emotions and criticism from the business community



*Word of the Oakland A's plans to move to Las Vegas sparked criticism of both Oakland leaders and the 'horror stories' to be told about the Oakland Coliseum. Ron Leuty | San Francisco Business Times*



By Mark Calvey – Senior Reporter, San Francisco Business Times  
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News that the Oakland Athletics are moving to Las Vegas sparked a range of reaction from Bay Area business leaders, while a site selection expert added the team to the tally of the region's losses in recent years.

"The news that the Oakland A's appear headed for Las Vegas is heartbreaking and would represent a terrible loss for Oakland, the team's fans and the Bay Area. Emotions are running very high," Jim Wunderman, president and CEO of the business-backed Bay Area Council said in a statement. The council counts the A's among its members.

"Even with some of the strong statements by city leaders that talks are dead, it's still not entirely clear whether there might be a path forward in the negotiations between the team and the city or whether there might be some other alternative for keeping the A's in Oakland, if it comes to that," Wunderman said. "Expressing hope that negotiations could somehow be salvaged seems a bit futile, but we encourage the city, the A's and Major League Baseball to exhaust every possible option for keeping the team in Oakland."

The Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce was also holding out hope that there might be a last-minute save.

"We hope circumstances work out for the team to remain rooted in Oakland, however we are a strong and resilient community and will move forward as One Oakland," said Barbara Leslie, president and CEO of the Oakland chamber, in a statement. "For over five decades the Oakland A's have been an important local employer and are woven into the cultural fabric of The Town."

One observer declaring a home run for Las Vegas was John Boyd, a site selection consultant who has long worked with clients wanting to move operations to Nevada. He had plenty of criticism for Oakland leaders unable to keep the A's in town.

"Beyond the economic consequences of losing a Major League Baseball franchise, it's really an indictment of Oakland's dysfunction that they were unable to get a deal done," Boyd, a principal at The Boyd Co. in Boca Raton, Florida, told me. "It's really a tale of two cities. You have one city that's done everything wrong and one that is doing everything right with Las Vegas.

"Las Vegas has become a professional sports superpower," said Boyd. That's thanks in large part to Oakland's loss of the Raiders and now the A's, both opting for Las Vegas.

The payoff in winning a professional sports team goes well beyond ticket sales and concessions on game day. Boyd pointed to the location branding, concerts and professional tournaments today's sports venues host.

“Smart economic development today really incorporates professional sports,” said Boyd. “It’s a platform to host influential business leaders from around the globe and attend sporting events.

“It’s also part of the live-work-play dynamic that makes a city successful in terms of attracting and retaining corporate investment and jobs,” Boyd said.

The loss of the A’s puts Oakland in the harsh national spotlight.

“This is a failed leadership in Oakland. We got here because of years of dysfunction,” Boyd said. “Economic development is about more than industry attraction. It’s also industry retention and part of that is keeping your major employers and your professional franchises.

“If you talk to baseball fans, they’ll tell you that Oakland is the worst stadium. They’ll tell you some horror stories,” Boyd said, who doesn’t cut any slack for Oakland leaders’ — and possibly their voters’ — reluctance to directly subsidize a new venue for the Oakland A’s.

“It takes leadership to make the case to voters,” Boyd said. “The stadium, if the deal has been structured properly, is in your best interest in terms of a job-generating project and a catalyst for all sorts of economic activity.

“This is a missed opportunity for Oakland.”