LETTER
Community Member of the Spokane Public School District —

As Spokane Public School Athletic Directors, we would like to personally reach out to the SPS community regarding the upcoming district sports stadium. As fellow community members, parents, administrators, and former coaches we stand in unity with the proposed location of the SPS Sport Stadium to be erected in the downtown Spokane area.

As most of you recall, in 2018, voters approved a Spokane Public School bond to establish a completely new sports stadium for our home district. The passed bond money will be used to build a completely new stadium regardless of chosen location. We recognize that some in our beloved community may have personally examined a possible location, but the bond was not run in conjunction with a decided location. The two possible options would be to either completely level, demolish, and rebuild J. Albi from the ground up due to its unplayable state or build a new stadium in a centrally located area. Choosing the downtown location would not only be more responsible but would also remove all major barriers to SPS students and benefit the SPS community in the highest possible way financially.

As athletic directors representing North Central, Rogers, Shadle, Ferris, and Lewis and Clark High Schools, we constantly focus on reducing barriers and optimizing opportunity in all forms of academic and extra-curricular programs. We do this because we understand the core needs of our students and we align ourselves with the SPS motto of providing excellence for everyone. Stadium access can determine which students can and cannot participate in school activities and the lack of accessibility can be devastating for a student’s high school experience. Access to stadiums that are far removed from SPS schools, like J. Albi, does not help our students grow and flourish due to the added transportation barriers. Location matters. Travel time matters. Public transportation matters.

Students prosper when they have maximized support of their families, friends, and community. A downtown located sports stadium offers this in unparalleled fashion. As each SPS school serves a mixture of under privileged and privileged populations, having a centrally located and easily accessible stadium is of utmost importance to us as SPS athletic directors. A downtown location means more students, parents, guardians, grandparents, and community members will walk, ride bikes or buses easily to get to games and events in a matter of minutes versus the current average 30 minute public transportation bus to J. Albi. The downtown location would eliminate this financial pressure of bus fares for our district families and students.

Financially a downtown stadium would be a school and community asset that yields benefits beyond the $350K annual cost savings for Spokane Public Schools and the $11.4M annual economic development. These two factors alone will greatly impact our SPS district for decades to come. Additionally, attendance at high school games, which has been dropping at J. Albi, will go up, thereby building connection and community at each school and for our city. It will be a point of pride for our community. Building the SPS Sports Stadium downtown would make our district majority owner and would solidify our priority in stadium access.

A downtown stadium will help students feel connected to their community through their performance in a highly visible and celebrated space. Giving our students a space to be on a big stage in the heart of our city will help elevate their high school experience and highlight their athletic, band or dance career. The opportunity to play on the same field as a professional soccer team would be very meaningful to our student athletes, and a rare opportunity that will bring our SPS students to a new athletic and extra-curricular level. This high quality experience is what our kids deserve.

Lastly, an added benefit of placing the SPS Sport Stadium in downtown Spokane is the opportunity to open J. Albi to potential development of eight additional synthetic turf multi-use fields for district and community use. As stated, J. Albi is no longer playable within safety standards so demissioning and demolishing the former stadium to build practice fields could bring new sports and tournaments to our area like soccer, rugby, and field hockey. Increasing opportunity and visibility for our students. Utilizing the possibility of J. Albi to become an additional sports complex and building the SPS Sport Stadium downtown would offer the community of SPS a true win — win scenario.

We love our community and our district, and we support this proposal to continue building upon our constant endeavor to do what is best for the students in the Spokane Public School District. This is a meticulous and responsible plan that has resolved and removed all potential barriers for our SPS students. Building our SPS Sports Stadium downtown is the best option for our students and their futures. We understand the personal connection some have with past stadiums. We value our past and we look to the future by growing and providing better options for our current and future SPS students. We urge the community, the school board, and its representatives to support building the SPS Sport Stadium in the proposed downtown location.

Gratefully —
Madison Petersen, North Central High School
Aaron Breck, Rogers High School
Stacey Ward, Ferris High School
Brett Tillman, Shadle High School
Dave Hughes, Lewis and Clark High School