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## It's not city's job to bail out the state

BY KEVIN FAULCONER  
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When I walk around downtown, I can't help but think about what it was like when I was a student at San Diego State University in the mid-1980s. Back then, you didn't spend much time downtown. There was little to see and less to do, and it wasn't the safest neighborhood.

Today, tens of thousands of people call downtown home. New hotels, affordable housing, stunning condominiums and soaring office towers line streets dotted with countless dining, entertainment and shopping choices. Downtown is energetic, expansive and eclectic. It attracts people from around the world.

Equally important is the \$60 million that downtown generates annually in sales and hotel taxes, which helps fund parks, libraries and other city services from San Ysidro to Rancho Bernardo and everywhere in between.

Downtown's success is inextricably linked to redevelopment – a mix of public and private investments in blighted neighborhoods. It has proved to be a powerful economic engine for San Diego, one that has made our city a national model.

Without redevelopment – a favorite target of Gov. Jerry Brown's budgeting principles – there would be no Gaslamp Quarter, Petco Park or Horton Plaza. East Village would be a shell of what it is today, and we would not be months away from breaking ground on a project that will beautify our waterfront along Harbor Drive between Broadway and B Street.

San Diego is known as America's Finest City and the heart of our city is downtown. We've accomplished a great deal, but there's still much more to do.

- I want to provide the parks, fire stations, roads and other services for a community that's expected to triple in size by 2030.
- I envision a downtown with an expanded Convention Center so San Diego can continue to attract the top conventions, including Comic-Con.

- I also want to see a voter-approved sports and entertainment complex downtown – a world-class facility with a retractable roof that would host the Aztecs, San Diego Chargers and numerous other events, including Super Bowls. It would draw people from across the region year-round and spur development of nearby restaurants, hotels, shops and condominiums.

“Petco Park has been a magnet for restaurants, hotels and other commercial uses,” says a recent report from the Texas-based Conventions, Sports & Leisure International.

All told, downtown redevelopment has created 62,000 jobs, including 23,000 permanent positions, and every public dollar invested created \$8.40 in private investment, according to Centre City Development Corp. statistics.

Without redevelopment, you can say goodbye to downtown’s renaissance, additional tax dollars and jobs. Every neighborhood would feel the impact. A thriving downtown stimulates the broader economy, and a healthy economy is good for property values across the city.

I make these points because Brown’s plan to balance the state’s massive budget deficit calls for disbanding redevelopment agencies across California. The governor’s proposal is shortsighted and misguided.

It’s not San Diego’s job to bail out the state, which should tackle its own spending and runaway pension costs.

The governor says he would funnel a portion of the redevelopment dollars to education. I say he’s proposing a shell game. History has shown Sacramento’s budget practices are anything but reliable, and when the state has grabbed local tax dollars, those dollars have routinely landed in the state’s general fund.

Further, I have yet to see a plan from the governor that shows schools would receive more money, which is exactly what would happen if redevelopment remains. Each year, the San Diego Unified School District receives 4 percent of property tax increases from downtown redevelopment. In 2013, that share jumps to 14 percent.

If more education dollars are truly needed in Sacramento, then difficult decisions on pensions and other reforms should be made. Instead, the governor is targeting low-hanging fruit, attempting to balance the state’s chronic budget deficits on the backs of our neighborhoods.

The City Council recently approved a resolution I authored calling on the governor to abandon his ill-advised plan. I will continue to strongly oppose the governor’s plan, and I urge you to do the same. Nothing short of San Diego’s future is at stake.

*Falconer represents San Diego City Council’s District 2, which includes Point Loma, downtown, Mission Hills and Old Town.*