

Potential Home Run for Fútbol Fans

Civic Stadium plan includes pro men's and women's soccer

Eugene sports fans used to cheering for home runs at Civic Stadium should prepare to yell "Gooooooooooooo!" instead.

If a "conceptual" plan put forth by Save Civic Stadium and the former president of Portland's Trail Blazers works out, the 10.2-acre space will become a sports, arts and park complex — with United Soccer Leagues men's and women's teams as anchor tenants.

The historic stadium will remain in rehabilitated, partial form, and the Eugene YMCA, KidSports and even 4J school teams may be partners in the new space.

The story of Marshall Glickman's report started a few years ago when Save Civic Stadium had one man asking for signatures at the gates during Eugene Emeralds games. In time, Save Civic grew to a larger, more vocal group, hoping to save the historic stadium for baseball games.

But the Ems decided to jump ship from Civic to the UO's new PK Park. Save Civic board members knew that Eugene's 4J school district, which owns the property and manages the stadium, would put the property up for sale.

In February, the school board granted Save Civic 90 days to come up with a reuse plan for the area, and the group hired Glickman, CEO of G2 Strategic, to write the plan.

Glickman's group was responsible for turning Portland Civic Stadium into PGE Park, among other sports ventures. Glickman agreed to consult and write the report for \$15,000, funded by Save Civic and other donors, including the City of Eugene.

Save Civic board member Jonathan Brandt said, "The school district knew they had to do something, so it was good to get Marshall involved."

Glickman consulted with Gensler Architects to create a conceptual site plan, but Glickman also emphasized that the basics of the site plan and timeline for the proposal might shift. "Don't concentrate on the details," he said. "The details could change."

Nonetheless, here are the basics of the proposal:

- Save Civic would form an **"operating entity"** to respond to 4J's eventual formal Request for Proposals (known as an RFP). Glickman's report recommends that this operating entity be formed and funded by 91 separate investments of \$25,000.

- That group would **partner with the YMCA**, which is rapidly outgrowing its current location, and the Y would get a new building on the current stadium site, plus access to other new facilities on the site. The YMCA Board is currently looking at the proposal.

- The group and 4J would form a **public/private partnership** to redevelop the site. Investors would assume the cost of maintaining the site. The developed site would provide income, through a lease agreement, to 4J, for the length of the operating agreement.

- The group would ask for a **bond measure** on next spring's ballot. That bond measure, set at \$70 million in the plan, would be a general obligation (GO) bond issued by the city and repaid by taxpayers. The report estimates that cost to be about \$84 a year for a home valued at Eugene's median home value, \$158,447.

- If the bond measure passed, the **old wooden grandstand would be "rehabbed,"** Glickman said in an interview, and all of the services below the bleachers (food services, locker rooms, etc.) would be moved into other buildings on the site. Another grandstand would be built on the east side of the site, next to the proposed YMCA building, for a total of about 6,000 seats.

- Between the grandstands an **artificial turf soccer field** would host a USL First Division pro soccer team. That's what Portland's Timbers team is right now, but the

Timbers, along with Vancouver's Whitecaps, are set to join the Seattle Sounders as Major League Soccer teams next season. In addition to the minor-league, pro men's team, a USL-W team would become one of the few pro women's sports teams in the Pacific Northwest. In addition, the field could accommodate "friendlies," or exhibition matches between teams that don't compete in league events.

- A **field house** open to the public for use "for cost," Glickman said, would lie between the new YMCA building and the tennis courts/parking structure.

- The field, field house and other facilities may be **open for use, for a fee, by KidSports, 4J teams** and others.

- The field would host **concerts, family events and other staged events** in a 2,500-4,500 seat range.

Glickman emphasized that any promoter could use the field for events appropriate to the neighborhood setting ("no metal festivals," one of the board members said with a smile). The Shedd's

Jim Ralph, who has been in discussions with Save Civic about this part of the proposal said he has been looking for outdoor venues for the Shedd (the Cuthbert has an exclusive operating agreement with Kip Kesey's Kesey Enterprises and Double Tee concerts). "It's the perfect spot," Ralph said. "The light is really nice as the sun goes down."

- A **350-car parking structure with indoor tennis courts** on top would run along E. 20th Ave., and another parking structure would be built across 20th along Amazon Parkway.

- No visible plans exist for **bike parking**, but Glickman said, "We'll have so much bike parking, you won't even believe it." He added that the final design would need to take into account input from Eugene's biking community. "It's in our self-interest" to consult with community members, he said.

Save Civic and Glickman spent the week of May 3-7 presenting the report to various proposed partners, the City of Eugene, the daily paper's editorial board and a variety of other interests, including neighborhood organizations. Glickman said that he worked closely with neighborhood groups in redeveloping Portland's Civic Stadium.

"If we can pull that off, make it happen like it says in the proposal, it would be an important asset to our neighborhood," said Friendly Area Neighbors co-chair Carlos Barrera. He added that he thought the plan would help business development in the neighborhood.

"Transparency is really important," Glickman said. "This benefits the entire community." Glickman said that a variety of teams and individuals could enjoy the field house.

Save Civic board member Alan Beck said, "We were fighting to save the stadium, but what we've stumbled upon is the potential for pride for this community."

The proposal suggests that aside from the soccer games, KidSports use and local promoters' concerts, the space might be used for a holiday ice skating rink, a music festival like Portland's Music Fest Northwest or a beer or wine festival.

In a comment on the *Eugene Weekly* Facebook page, Grant Reiber wrote, "I'm stoked on this as opposed to putting in apartments. ... Hope it works out!"

Barrera said that problems with noise or parking could be dealt with, though he wouldn't expect many. "It's such a plus, such a positive aspect for the community," he added.

Ralph said, "Some pieces of land just have a magical feel. It would be a shame if it went away."

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This story appeared in a slightly different form on the Eugene Weekly blog on May 8, 2010.

