

# PRESS ENTERPRISE

## Opinion

# RIVERSIDE: City should think bigger in planning soccer complex

By [Press-Enterprise](#)

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Riverside now faces a decision affecting today's soccer-playing young people and adults, as well as future generations, on whether to build a state-of-the-art soccer complex in north Riverside that will generate big dollars for the city and give it a fine reputation in the national soccer community.

The Riverside City Council can play it safe and kick the soccer ball downfield or it can make a bold move and score a goal that will create a huge win for Riverside and its surrounding communities. We say go for the goal and give a 10,000-seat soccer stadium and multi-field complex to thousands of our young people who don't have enough soccer fields on which to play.

We are uniting our voices and providing our vast background of business experience to a project now before the City Council that involves developing the closed Riverside Golf Club, now an eyesore, adjacent to Ab Brown Complex and Reid Park. We want a quality soccer complex, bigger than the city is considering, that has the potential to draw youth soccer tournaments similar to the AYSO National 2014 Games that will be co-hosted by the cities of Riverside and Torrance.

The soccer complex we envision can match the national status now enjoyed by our fine Riverside Aquatic Center at Riverside City College that hosts big swimming and diving competitions. We have nothing to financially gain by backing this project — only to see our hometown become an even better place to live and raise a family.

The city has requested proposals for the city-owned property, but we believe the proposed scope lacks the vision that Riverside's citizens deserve.

In more than 50 years, Riverside soccer has grown from about 15 players to more than 10,000 young people playing, ranging in age from 6 to 18. About 200 teams compete each year in the Riverside Invitational Soccer Tournament. Another 100 teams could be formed with a new soccer complex. International teams could pay the city to use its stadium for off-season conditioning. Imagine soccer fans coming from throughout Southern California to watch the sport's greatest stars play and train.

We believe this project can generate income from tournaments, visitors, parking, vendors' leases and creative planning that would help offset the projected \$40 million cost for a complex that could use all of the available 122 city-owned acres. The soccer fields now at Ab Brown Soccer Complex can be moved to the old Riverside Golf Club property that now has about 112 acres. In place of those old fields, we propose building parking lots, including a recreational vehicle lot that would generate operating income from families coming from out of town to see matches.

The city wants to build 11 small soccer fields, five medium-sized fields and eight full-sized fields. We support building all the fields at full size, then dividing them into smaller fields as they are needed.

At the corner of Main Street and Columbia Avenue is a 10-acre parcel that can be the cornerstone of this project. This area not only can financially benefit from the soccer complex, but it also can serve the surrounding areas. We suggest the city could lease or sell that property to a developer who could construct a commercial mall featuring a supermarket, sporting goods store and restaurants. This development could offset much of the cost of the complex.

There are always people who find excuses to take the easy path of least resistance. We believe Riverside is at a crossroads where it can just take the easy path that gives our children a few more soccer fields than they already have. But we want more for our city.

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