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## Mesquite To Become Amateur Sports Mecca

### *Deal Involves Adidas Shoe Company*

When you think of amateur sports, you'll think of Mesquite. That's the hope for a massive new development project introduced at a special meeting of the Mesquite City Council on Tuesday. The ***Desert Falls International Sports Resort*** Developers out of Sandy, Utah rolled out their vision of a mega-park to be built adjacent to the city's new Regional Park, complete with 20 softball fields, an archery range, soccer fields, indoor workout and training facilities, and even a golf course.

The centerpiece will be a 15,000-seat softball stadium to be used for televised softball and baseball championships. The group, which included **former Los Angeles Lakers NBA basketball star A.C. Green**, made their pitch to the city council on Tuesday afternoon. **"This will be the premiere location for amateur sports in the United States,"** proclaimed Paul Morris, the spokesman for the company. Part of the plan calls for the **city to sell the group 920 acres** of city-owned land for somewhere between \$6 and \$7 million. Morris also confirmed that Adidas, the international sports shoe company, has expressed interest in becoming part of the project.

The involvement is expected to **include sports camps held in Mesquite sponsored and conducted by some of the biggest names in sports**, including **soccer icon David Beckham and NFL star Reggie Bush**. "This will be a state of the art complex," said Josh Olmstead, one of the partners involved in the project.

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**"There isn't anything like it in the country."** Olmstead has been a key fixture in coordinating the softball tournaments at the Huntsman World Senior Games which are held in Southern Utah each year, and helped put together the Adidas Elite Challenge softball tournament held in St. George. He is also the Director of Softball under the Leisure Services department for the City of St. George. **Olmstead mentioned that the new facility in Mesquite will feature more than 30 sports, with more than 80 sports groups expected to use the complex.** Among the more grandiose plans are the construction of an archery range and beach volleyball facility, **both of which are intended to serve as training facilities for Olympic athletes in those two events.** Larry Becknell, an engineering consultant out of Sandy, Utah who is also a partner on the project, believes the park will be just the thing for a community battered by the crumbling economy.

**"If there is such a thing as a recession-proof business, this is it,"** Becknell told the council on Tuesday, explaining that even during the current economic meltdown, the amateur sports industry is still showing an upward trend. Becknell also mentioned that the group is talking with HOK Sport out of Kansas City, an architectural firm which has been involved in the design of such Major League Baseball venues as Baltimore's Oriole Park at Camden Yards, Detroit's Comerica Park, Angel Stadium of Anaheim, Denver's Coors Field, and even the new stadium for the New York Yankees. In addition to the sports facilities, the project will also include commercial retail development, as well as residential construction.

Former Lakers star A.C. Green presented Mayor Susan Holecheck with a “Li'l A.C.” bear, which is the hallmark of his Youth Foundation and “Game Plan” program which promotes abstinence among teenagers.

Green, who holds the NBA record for playing in more consecutive games than any player in the history of the NBA or ABA during his 16 years, won three NBA titles while with the Lakers. On Tuesday, he spoke about the importance of the new project to youngsters. **He also mentioned that the facility will also include resources which are likely to draw professional athletes to the area for off-season training and rehabilitation stints. “I look forward to letting some of my friends know about Mesquite,” Green added, hinting that other NBA stars would likely follow.** During the council’s question and answer period, several councilmen applauded the plan. “I’m excited about this project,” said councilman Bill Wells. Councilman David Bennett expressed some concerns about a part of the plan which includes the construction of five new hotels, querying whether this would negatively impact the existing hotels in Mesquite. Olmstead pointed out that the hotels will be phased in as need dictates, and **reminded the council that during some of the planned tournaments, every hotel room in Mesquite and St. George will be filled. “The archery competition alone is expected to draw 20,000 people,” Olmstead said.**

He also confirmed that none of the planned hotels will include gaming. According to Morris, **the plan calls for the first softball tournament to be held in 2010.** “The first phase will be right away,” Morris said. “The rest will be based on market needs.” Becknell added that the hope is to have the sale in place by May of this year, **and all phases of the project to be complete within four to five years.** Bennett also wondered aloud about the financing for the half-billion dollar project. “I can definitely see the benefit to this,” Bennett said. “One hang-up I have is, in this economy, how are you going to get \$500 million? I totally want to believe you, but there’s just no money out there.”

According to Mark Meersman, the financial guy for the project, the company will use financing from local banks and credit unions, in addition to other lending sources for the construction phase of the project. For the long term financing, he mentioned that the company would use bonds and “private placement of money.” He also alluded to the pension fund of an unnamed company worth more than a half-billion dollars as a source for funding. None of the council members addressed the issue of land prices.

The proposal calls for the city to sell the developers 920 acres at between \$6,500 and \$7,500 an acre, a far cry from the \$25,000-\$50,000 the city has been getting for land in that area over the last three years.

The developers are also expected to provide \$1.5 million toward extending Hardy Way, and have committed to bring high-speed fiber optic internet to that part of town if the project is approved. That approval came lightning fast after Holecheck decided not to allow public comment or questions on the proposal, with **the council approving the measure 5-0.**