



San Jose Earthquakes cleared to build new downtown stadium

The San Jose Earthquakes have officially been cleared to build themselves a new home.

The Quakes' plans for a \$60 million, 18,000-seat stadium cleared its final bureaucratic hurdle February 22 when the San Jose Planning Commission voted unanimously to deny an appeal by a local resident looking to have the team's planned development permit rescinded due to noise and light concerns.

The decision clears the way for the stadium to be built on a 14-acre plot on Coleman Avenue across the street from Lowes and Mineta San Jose International Airport.

The 6-0 vote to reject the appeal came after nearly three hours of testimony from public speakers representing agencies and organizations including the San Jose Downtown Resident's Association (SJDRA).

"With an economic impact of an estimated \$49-\$62 million dollars, or \$1.27 billion over the next 30 years, along with a guaranteed equivalent of 1500 – 1800 jobs, now is not the time to jeopardize a signature project that will be built with NO city subsidies and will clean up a severely blighted area on a limited use site," said SJDRA president Kymberli Brady. "San Jose deserves it, our downtown needs it and residents want it."

Major League Soccer (MLS) president Mark Abbott also spoke in favor of the project.

"I can tell you in 20 years working for MLS, this is the first time I've ever spoken before a group like this and not been asking for public money," Abbott told the commission. "It's very unique to find, in this day and age — or any day and age, really — an ownership group like we have here in San Jose, willing to 100 percent privately finance the facility."

Abbott also noted that the Quakes had agreed to forego staging concerts, a lucrative sideline at other soccer-specific stadiums built for MLS teams, in order to help mitigate noise concerns.

"I think it's a win for everybody, and we will make sure we're good neighbors," Quakes owner Lew Wolff said.

Quakes team president David Kaval said he was thrilled with the turnout.

"The people here, their passion and what they meant for the Earthquakes and for the community carried the day, and that it something that we're truly proud of."

Once the plans are drawn up and the financing finalized, the team plans to break ground this year for a 2013 opening.

"It's a milestone because we can move ahead on a project," Wolff said. "That's a rarity these days."