

City proposal pre-empts costly athletic facility

By Janet Pearson

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The city's purchase of 67 acres in south Tulsa for a park would pre-empt a plan envisioned by a group of California investors for "a first-class athletic and sports convention facility."

The development would have generated up to \$5 million in property tax for the city over several years, sales-tax revenue and jobs, said John Moody, Tulsa real-estate and zoning attorney representing the investors.

The concept - which featured shops, live entertainment facilities, restaurants, bicycle and jogging trails, a pier, landscaped plazas and park areas - has been shelved. The river frontage location offered a unique opportunity, Moody said.

Mayor Rodger Randle said private enterprise may yet be a part of the city's park plan. He said he wants the park to mix athletic fields with open space to become a "cornerstone for the park system for the rest of our lifetimes."

The investor group offered to acquire the land in phases from landowner First National Bank and Trust Co. of Tulsa which prompted the city's plan to purchase the land, Randle said.

The group was given no opportunity to make a counteroffer, Moody said.

Jack Crowley of Tulsa conducted a land planning study for the investors that pegged development costs at \$25 million.

Moody noted the figure was only an estimate.

Professional and amateur volleyball tournaments, competitive swim meets, bicycling events and other athletic competitions were planned, in addition to shopping areas, entertainment facilities and the continuation of the River Parks trail.

Moody wrote to Randle outlining the plan. Moody said the development would have generated property-tax money that could have funded an odor-control project at the west bank sewage plant to make the east bank land more conducive to recreation.

"This would have financed the city's share of the purchase price without using the surplus sales tax," he wrote.