

Torrance Daily Breeze

NFL stadium is back in play in Carson

By Gene Maddaus Staff Writer

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It's been more than three years since [Carson](#) gave up its dim hopes of attracting a professional football team - and more than a decade since the city seemed like a real contender for the NFL.

The former landfill where agent Michael Ovitz once dreamed a stadium could be built is now undergoing grading to make way for a shopping mall.

But the dream is too tantalizing for a Beverly Hills real estate developer to let it die. The developer, Richard Rand, has been quietly working on plans to build a stadium on a nearby parcel, south of the intersection of the San Diego (405) and Harbor (110) freeways.

Rand has not unveiled any plans or sought any coverage of his proposal. The only clue it even exists is that it has appeared on a few agendas of closed Carson City Council sessions, where it is described only in the vaguest of terms.

In recent months, the city has entered into an exclusive negotiating agreement with Rand's company, which gives him the right to try to put a deal together but does not bind the city to support the project.

"We've assured Richard and his folks that should that happen we certainly would be supportive," said Clifford Graves, the city's redevelopment manager. "He does appear to have the capacity on his team to make a serious effort."

The National Football League has toyed with a number of new stadium sites ever since both the Los Angeles Raiders and the Los Angeles Rams, who played in Anaheim, left town in 1995. Various developers and deal-

makers have vowed to bring football to the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, Pasadena, Carson, Irwindale, Inglewood and Anaheim.

Every time, the NFL has pulled back - leading a lot of people to believe that Los Angeles has just been used as a bargaining chip in the league's hardball negotiations with other cities.

The latest proposal is that of billionaire developer Ed Roski, who wants to build a new stadium in the City of Industry by 2012. Roski's plan has been met with skepticism by football fans whose hopes have already been raised and lowered too many times.

"People in the greater L.A. area think the league is not interested in coming back," said John Semcken, vice president of Roski's company, Majestic Realty. "Our experience is that's 180 degrees from reality. They want to be here in the worst way."

Roski expects to have final City Council approval of his environmental documents by spring, at which point he expects to start courting a team.

Meanwhile, Rand is at the earliest stages of his proposal. He owns only 12 acres of the 91-acre site, and doesn't expect to have architectural plans done until 2010. The proposed site, a mix of industrial buildings and vacant land, sits on a former garbage dump, and is contaminated.

"I would say it's too preliminary to get excited about it," said Pete Roth, Rand's attorney. "So many things have to go right. No one would say the desired goal is around the corner or imminent."

Rand has earlier proposed building a Wal-Mart on the site. That project ended badly when former Mayor Daryl Sweeney suggested that to win approval, Rand should hire his friend Robert Pryce, who demanded \$100,000 and a cut of the project.

Rand ended up suing the city and winning \$827,000, while Sweeney and Pryce ended up in prison.

At the moment, Rand's development concept is so preliminary that he may end up deciding to build another shopping center or a business park instead of a stadium.

Still, Carson has certain features that make a stadium an interesting option. Bounded by the two freeways on the north and west, and by Torrance Boulevard and Main Street on the south and east, the site is easy to get to from L.A. and Orange County. It would be next door to the future Boulevards at South Bay mall project, and a short drive from soccer and tennis stadiums at the Home Depot Center.

"Carson is at kind of a perfect traffic location," Roth said. "That site has great freeway visibility. That's what makes the possibility of it exciting."

The biggest problem - aside from all the problems inherent with any plan to lure the NFL - is the size of the parcel. At only 91 acres, it would seem to require parking garages, which are expensive to build.

Roth said that his client has already put "significant resources" into the proposal.

Graves said the city has not been asked to subsidize the project, although a document laying out development milestones includes an item about determining "deliverables" from the city, the county and the state.

Another item calls for the city to reinstate its powers of eminent domain in the project area.

Asked about the Rand proposal, an NFL spokesman declined to comment.

"We continue to monitor developments in Southern California," said spokesman Brian McCarthy. "We are not commenting on potential sites or suitors."

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